


THE
FIRST VIOLIN.



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THE FIRST VIOLIN.

A Novel.

“Entbehren sollst du: sollst entbehren!”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,

Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen.

1878.

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THE FIRST VIOLIN.

BOOK III.—*Continued.*

EUGEN COURVOISIER.

CHAPTER III.

“The merely great are, all in all,
No more than what the merely small
Esteem them. Man’s opinion
Neither conferred nor can remove
This man’s dominion.”

THREE years passed—an even way.
In three years there happened
little of importance—little, that
is, of open importance—to either of us. I
read that sentence again, and cannot help
smiling: “to either of us.” It shows the

progress that our friendship had made. Yes, it had grown every day.

I had no past, painful or otherwise, which I could even wish to conceal; I had no thought that I desired hidden from the man who had become my other self. What there was of good in me, what of evil, he saw. It was laid open to him, and he appeared to consider that the good predominated over the bad; for, from that first day of meeting, our intimacy went on steadily in one direction—increasing, deepening. He was six years older than I was. At the end of this time of which I speak he was one and thirty, I five and twenty; but we met on equal ground—not that I had anything approaching his capacities in any way. I do not think that had anything to do with it. Our happiness did not depend on mental supremacy. I loved him—because I could not help it; he me, because—upon my word, I can think of no good reason—probably because he did.

And yet we were as unlike as possible. He had habits of reckless extravagance—or what seemed to me reckless extravagance—and a lordly manner (when he forgot himself)

of speaking of things, which absolutely appalled my economical burgher-soul. I had certain habits, too—the outcomes of my training, and my sparing, middle-class way of living—which I saw puzzled him very much. To cite only one insignificant incident. We were both great readers, and, despite our sometimes arduous work, contrived to get through a good amount of books in the year. One evening he came home with a brand-new novel, in three volumes, in his hands.

“Here, Friedel; here is some mental dissipation for to-night. Drop that Schopenhauer, and study Heyse. Here is *Die Kinder der Welt*—it will suit our case exactly, for it is what we are ourselves.”

“How clean it looks!” I observed innocently.

“So it ought, seeing that I have just paid for it.”

“Paid for it!” I almost shouted. “Paid for it! You don’t mean that you have bought the book?”

“Calm thy troubled spirit! You don’t surely mean that you thought me capable of *stealing* the book?”

"You are hopeless. You have paid at least eighteen marks for it."

"That's the figure to a Pfennig."

"Well," said I, with conscious superiority, "you might have had the whole three volumes from the library for five or six groschen."

"I know. But their copy looked so disgustingly greasy, I couldn't have touched it; so I ordered a new one."

"Very well. Your accounts will look well when you come to balance and take stock," I retorted.

"What a fuss about a miserable eighteen marks!" said he, stretching himself out, and opening a volume. "Come, Sig, learn how the children of the world are wiser in their generation than the children of light, and leave that low person to prematurely age himself by beginning to balance his accounts before they are ripe for it."

"I don't know whether you are aware that you are talking the wildest and most utter rubbish that was ever conceived," said I, nettled. "There is simply no sense in it. Given an income of——"

“*Aber, ich bitte Dich!*” he implored, though laughing ; and I was silent.

But his three volumes of *Die Kinder der Welt* furnished me with many an opportunity to “point a moral or adorn a tale,” and I believe really warned him off one or two other similar extravagances. The idea of men in our position recklessly ordering three-volume novels because the circulating library copy happened to be greasy, was one I could not get over for a long time.

We still inhabited the same rooms at No. 45, in the Wehrhahn. We had outstayed many other tenants; men had come and gone, both from our house and from those rooms over the way whose windows faced ours. We passed our time in much the same way—hard work at our profession, and, with Eugen at least, hard work out of it; the education of his boy, whom he made his constant companion in every leisure moment, and taught, with a wisdom that I could hardly believe—it seemed so like inspiration—composition, translation, or writing of his own—incessant employment of some kind. He never seemed able to pass an idle mo-

ment; and yet there were times when, it seemed to me, his work did not satisfy him, but rather seemed to disgust him.

Once when I asked him if it were so, he laid down his pen and said, "Yes."

"Then why do you do it?"

"Because—for no reason that I know; but because I am an unreasonable fool."

"An unreasonable fool to work hard?"

"No; but to go on as if hard work *now* can ever undo what years of idleness have done."

"Do you believe in work?" I asked.

"I believe it is the very highest and holiest thing there is, and the grandest purifier and cleanser in the world. But it is not a panacea against every ill. I believe that idleness is sometimes as strong as work, and stronger. You may do that in a few years of idleness which a lifetime of afterwork won't cover, mend, or improve. You may make holes in your coat from sheer laziness, and then find that no amount of stitching will patch them up again."

I seldom answered these mystic monologues. Love gives a wonderful sharpness

even to dull wits ; it had sharpened mine so that I often felt he indulged in those speeches out of sheer desire to work off some grief or bitterness from his heart, but that a question might, however innocent, overshoot the mark, and touch a 'sore spot—the thing I most dreaded. And I did not feel it essential to my regard for him to know every item of his past.

In such cases, however, when there *is* something behind—when one knows it, only does not know what it is (and Eugen had never tried to conceal from me that something had happened to him which he did not care to tell)—then, even though one accept the fact, as I accepted it, without dispute or resentment, one yet involuntarily builds theories, has ideas, or rather the ideas shape themselves about the object of interest, and take their colouring from him, one cannot refrain from conjectures, surmises. Mine were necessarily of the most vague and shadowy description ; more negative than active, less theories as to what he had been or done than inferences from what he let fall in talk or conduct as to what he had *not* been or done.

In our three years' acquaintance, it is true, there had not been much opportunity for any striking display on his part of good or bad qualities ; but certainly ample opportunity of testing whether he were, taken all in all, superior, even with, or inferior to the average man of our average acquaintance. And, briefly speaking, to me he had become a standing model of a superior man.

I had by this time learnt to know that when there were many ways of looking at a question, that one, if there were such an one, which was less earthly practical, more ideal and less common than the others, would most inevitably be the view taken by Eugen Courvoisier, and advocated by him with warmth, energy, and eloquence to the very last. The point from which he surveyed the things and the doings of life was, taken all in all, a higher one than that of other men, and was illumined with something of the purple splendour of that "light that never was on sea or land." A less practical conduct, a more ideal view of right and wrong—sometimes a little fantastic even—always imbued with something of the knightliness which sat upon

him as a natural attribute. *Ritterlich*, Karl Linders called him, half in jest, half in earnest; and *ritterlich* he was.

In his outward demeanour to the world with which he came in contact, he was courteous to men; to a friend or intimate, as myself, an ever new delight and joy; to all people, truthful to fantasy; and to women, on the rare occasions on which I ever saw him in their company, he was polite and deferential—but rather overwhelmingly so; it was a politeness which raised a barrier, and there was a glacial surface to the manner. I remarked this, and speculated about it. He seemed to have one manner to every woman with whom he had anything to do; the maidservant who, at her leisure or pleasure, was supposed to answer our behests (though he would often do a thing himself, alleging that he preferred doing so to “seeing that poor creature’s apron”), old Frau Henschel who sold the programmes at the *Casse* at the concerts, to the young ladies who presided behind a counter, to every woman to whom he spoke a chance word, up to Frau Sybel, the wife of the great painter, who came to

negotiate about lessons for the lovely Fräulein, her daughter, who wished to play a different instrument from that affected by every one else. The same inimitable courtesy, the same unruffled, unruffleable quiet indifference, and the same utter unconsciousness that he, or his appearance, or behaviour, or anything about him, could possibly interest them. And yet he was a man eminently calculated to attract women, only he never to this day has been got to believe so, and will often deprecate his poor power of entertaining ladies.

I often watched this little by-play of behaviour from and to the fairer sex with silent amusement, more particularly when Eugen and I made shopping expeditions for Sigmund's benefit. We once went to buy stockings—winter stockings for him; it was a large miscellaneous and smallware shop, full of young women behind the counters and ladies of all ages before them.

We found ourselves in the awful position of being the only male creatures in the place. Happy in my insignificance and plainness, I survived the glances that were thrown upon

us ; I did not wonder that they fell upon my companions. Eugen consulted a little piece of paper on which Frau Schmidt had written down what we were to ask for, and, marching straight up to a disengaged shopwoman, requested to be shown coloured woollen stockings.

“For yourself, *mein Herr* ?” she inquired, with a fascinating smile.

“No, thank you ; for my little boy,” says Eugen politely, glancing deferentially round at the piles of wool and packets of hosen around.

“Ah, so ! For the young gentleman ? *Bitte, meine Herren*, be seated.” And she gracefully pushes chairs for us ; on one of which I, unable to resist so much affability, sit down.

Eugen remains standing ; and Sigmund, desirous of having a voice in the matter, mounts upon his stool, kneels upon it, and leans his elbows on the counter.

The affable young woman returns, and with a glance at Eugen that speaks of worlds beyond coloured stockings, proceeds to untie a packet and display her wares. He turns

them over. Clearly he does not like them, and does not understand them. They are striped ; some are striped latitudinally, others longitudinally. Eugen turns them over, and the young woman murmurs that they are of the *best* quality.

“Are they?” says he, and his eyes roam round the shop. “Well, Sigmund, wilt thou have legs like a stork, as these long stripes will inevitably make them, or wilt thou have legs like a zebra’s back?”

“I should like legs like a little boy, please,” is Sigmund’s modest expression of a reasonable desire.

Eugen surveys them.

“*Von der besten Qualität,*” repeats the young woman impressively.

“Have you no *blue* ones?” demands Eugen. “All blue, you know. He wears blue clothes.”

“Assuredly, *mein Herr*, but of a much dearer description ; real English, magnificent.”

She retires to find them, and a young lady who has been standing near us turns and observes :

“Excuse me—you want stockings for your little boy?”

We both assent. It is a joint affair, of equal importance to both of us.

“I wouldn’t have those,” says she, and I remark her face.

I have seen her often before—moreover I have seen her look very earnestly at Eugen. I learnt later that her name was Anna Sartorius. Ere she can finish, the shop-woman, with wreathed smiles still lingering about her face, returns and produces stockings—fine, blue ribbed stockings, such as the children of rich English parents wear. Their fineness, and the smooth quality of the wool, and the good shape appear to soothe Eugen’s feelings. He pushes away his heap of striped ones, which look still coarser and commoner now, observing hopefully and cheerily :

“*Ja wohl!* That is more what I mean.” (The poor dear fellow had meant nothing, but he knew what he wanted when he saw it.) “These look more like thy legs, Sigmund, *nicht wahr?* I’ll take——”

I dug him violently in the ribs.

“Hold on, Eugen ! How much do they cost the pair, Fräulein ?”

“Two thalers twenty-five ; the very *best* quality,” she says, with a ravishing smile.

“There ! eight shillings a pair !” say I. “It is ridiculous.”

“Eight shillings !” he repeats ruefully. “That is too much.”

“They are *real* English, *mein Herr*,” she says feelingly.

“But, *um Gotteswillen* ! don’t we make any like them in Germany ?”

“Oh, sir !” she says reproachfully.

“Those others are such brutes,” he remarks, evidently wavering.

I am in despair. The young woman is annoyed to find that he does not even see the amiable looks she has bestowed upon him, so she sweeps back the heap of striped stockings and announces that they are only three marks the pair — naturally inferior, but you cannot have the best article for nothing.

Fräulein Sartorius, about to go, says to Eugen :

“*Mein Herr*, ask for such and such an

article. I know they keep them, and you will find it what you want."

Eugen, much touched, and much surprised (as he always is and has been) that any one should take an interest in him, makes a bow, and a speech, and rushes off to open the door for Fräulein Sartorius, thanking her profusely for her goodness. The young lady behind the counter smiles bitterly, and now looks as if butter would not melt in her mouth. I, assuming the practical, mention the class of goods referred to by Fräulein Sartorius, which she unwillingly brings forth, and we straight-way purchase. The errand accomplished, Eugen takes Sigmund by the hand, makes a grand bow to the young woman, and instructs his son to take off his hat, and, this process being complete, we sally forth again, and half-way home Eugen remarks that it was very kind of that young lady to help us.

"Very," I assent dryly, and when Sigmund has contributed the artless remark that all the ladies laughed at us and looked at us, and has been told by his father not to be so self-conceited, for that no one can *possibly*

wish to look at us, we arrive at home, and the stockings are tried on.

Constantly I saw this willingness to charm on the part of women : constantly the same utter ignorance of any such thought on the part of Eugen, who was continually expressing his surprise at the kindness of people, and adding with the gravest simplicity that he had always found it so, at which announcement Karl laughed till he had to hold his sides.

And Sigmund ? Since the day when Courvoisier had said to me, slowly and with difficulty, the words about parting, he had mentioned the subject twice—always with the same intention expressed. Once it was when I had been out during the evening, and he had not. I came into our sitting-room, and found it in darkness. A light came from the inner room, and, going towards it, I found that he had placed the lamp upon a distant stand, and was sitting by the child's crib ; his arms folded ; his face calm and sad. He rose when he saw me, brought the lamp into the parlour again, and said :

“ Pardon, Friedel, that I left you without

light. The time of parting will come, you know, and I was taking a look in anticipation of the time when there will be no one there to look at."

I bowed. There was a slight smile upon his lips, but I would rather have heard a broken voice and seen a mien less serene.

The second, and only time, up to now, and the events I am coming to, was once when he had been giving Sigmund a music-lesson, as we called it—that is to say, Eugen took his violin and played a melody, but incorrectly, and Sigmund told him every time a wrong note was played, or false time kept. Eugen sat, giving a look now and then at the boy, whose small, delicate face was bright with intelligence, whose dark eyes blazed with life and fire, and whose every gesture betrayed spirit, grace, and quick understanding. A child for a father to be proud of. No meanness there; no littleness in the fine, high-bred features; everything that the father's heart could wish, except perhaps some little want of robustness: one might have desired that the limbs were less exquisitely graceful and delicate—more stout and robust.

As Eugen laid aside his violin, he drew the child towards him and asked (what I had never heard him ask before) :

“What wilt thou be, Sigmund, when thou art a man?”

“*Ja, lieber Vater*, I will be just like thee.”

“How just like me?”

“I will do what thou dost.”

“So! Thou wilt be a *Musiker* like me and Friedel?”

“*Ja wohl!*” said Sigmund; but something else seemed to weigh upon his small mind. He eyed his father with a reflective look, then looked down at his own small hands and slender limbs (his legs were cased in *the* new stockings).

“How?” inquired his father.

“I should like to be a musician,” said Sigmund, who had a fine confidence in his sire, and confided his every thought to him.

“I don’t know how to say it,” he went on, resting his elbows upon Eugen’s knee, and propping his chin upon his two small fists, he looked up into his father’s face.

“Friedhelm is a musician, but he is not

like thee," he pursued. Eugen reddened : I laughed.

"True as can be, Sigmund," I said.

" ' I would I were as honest a man,' " said Eugen, slightly altering *Hamlet* ; but as he spoke English I contented myself with shaking my head at him.

" I like Friedel," went on Sigmund. " I love him : he is good. But thou, *mein Vater*——"

" Well ?" asked Eugen again.

" I *will* be like thee," said the boy vehemently, his eyes filling with tears. " I *will*. Thou saidst that men who try can do all they will—and I will, I will."

" Why, my child ?"

It was a long earnest look that the child gave the man. Eugen had said to me some few days before, and I had fully agreed with him,

" That child's life is one strife after the beautiful, in art and nature, and life—how will he succeed in the search ?"

I thought of this—it flashed subtly through my mind as Sigmund gazed at his father with a childish adoration — then,

suddenly springing round his neck, said passionately :

“Thou art so beautiful—so beautiful ! I *must* be like thee.”

Eugen bit his lip momentarily, saying to me in English :

“ I am his God, you see, Friedel. What will he do when he finds out what a common clay figure it was he worshipped ?”

But he had not the heart to banter the child : only held the little clinging figure to his breast : the breast which Sigmund recognised as his heaven.

It was after this that Eugen said to me when we were alone :

“ It must come before he thinks less of me than he does now, Friedel.”

To these speeches I could never make any answer, and he always had the same singular smile—the same paleness about the lips, and unnatural light in the eyes when he spoke so.

He had accomplished one great feat in those three years—he had won over to himself his comrades, and that without, so to speak, actively laying himself out to do so. He had struck us all as something so *very*

different from the rest of us, that on his arrival, and for some time afterwards, there lingered some idea that he must be opposed to us. But I very soon, and the rest by gradual degrees, got to recognise that though in—not of us, yet he was no natural enemy of ours: if he made no advances, he never avoided or repulsed any, but on the very contrary, seemed surprised and pleased that any one should take an interest in him. We soon found that he was extremely modest as to his own merits and eager to acknowledge those of other people.

“And,” said Karl Linders once, twirling his moustache, and smiling in the consciousness that his own outward presentment was not to be called repulsive, “he can’t help his looks: no fellow can.”

At the time of which I speak, his popularity was much greater than he knew, or would have believed if he had been told of it.

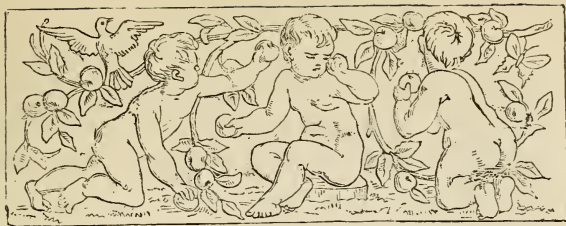
Only between him and Von Francius there remained a constant gulf and a continual coldness. Von Francius never stepped aside to make friends; Eugen most certainly never

went out of his way to ingratiate himself with Von Francius. Courvoisier had been appointed contrary to the wish of Von Francius, which perhaps caused the latter to regard him a little coldly—even more coldly than was usual with him, and he was never enthusiastic about any one or anything ; while to Eugen there was absolutely nothing in Von Francius which attracted him, save the magnificent *power* of his musical talent—a power which was as calm and cold as himself.

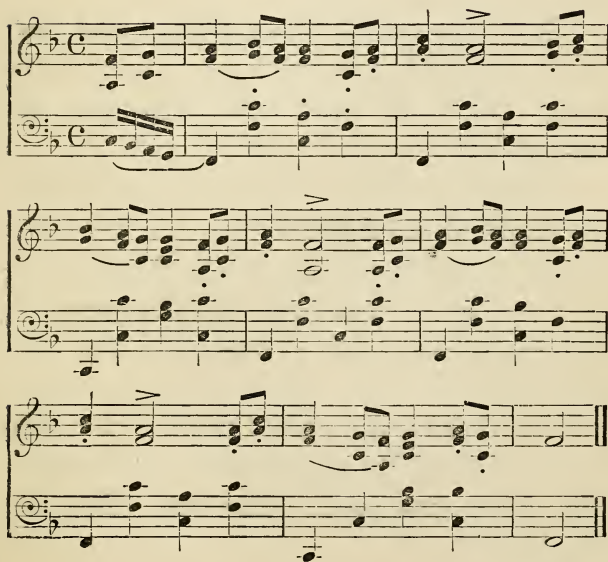
Max von Francius was a man about whom there were various opinions, expressed and unexpressed : he was a person who never spoke of himself, and who contrived to live a life more isolated and apart than any one I have ever known, considering that he went much into society, and mixed a good deal with the world. In every circle in Elberthal which could by any means be called select, his society was eagerly sought, nor did he refuse it. His days were full of engagements ; he was consulted, and his opinion deferred to in a singular manner—singular, because he was no sayer of smooth things,

but the very contrary : because he hung upon no patron, submitted to no dictation, was in his way an autocrat. This state of things he had brought about entirely by force of his own will and in utter opposition to precedent, for the former directors had been notoriously under the thumb of certain influential outsiders, who were in reality the directors of the Director. It was the universal feeling that though the Herr Direktor was the busiest man, and had the largest circle of acquaintance of any one in Elberthal, yet that he was less really known than many another man of half his importance. His business as *Musik-direktor* took up much of his time : the rest might have been filled to overflowing with private lessons, but Von Francius was not a man to make himself cheap : it was a distinction to be taught by him, the more so as the position or circumstances of a would-be pupil appeared to make not the very smallest impression upon him. Distinguished for hard, practical common-sense, a ready sneer at anything high-flown or romantic, discouraging not so much enthusiasm as the outward manifestation of


it, which he called melodrama, Max von Francius was the cynosure of all eyes in Elberthal, and bore the scrutiny with glacial indifference.



CHAPTER IV.



JOACHIM RAFF. *Op. 177.*

“AKE yourself quite easy, Herr Concertmeister. No child that was left to my charge was ever known to come to harm.”

Thus Frau Schmidt to Eugen, as she stood with dubious smile and folded arms in our parlour, and harangued him, while he and I stood, violin-cases in our hands, in a great hurry, and anxious to be off.

“You are very kind, Frau Schmidt ; I hope he will not trouble you.”

“He is a well-behaved child, and not nearly so disagreeable and bad to do with as most. And at what time will you be back ?”

“That is uncertain. It just depends upon the length of the Probe.”

“*Ha!* It^{*} is all the same. I am going out for a little excursion this afternoon : to the Grafenberg, and I shall take the boy with me.”

“Oh, thank you,” said Eugen ; “that will be very kind. He wants some fresh air, and I’ve had no time to take him out. You are *very* kind.”

“Trust to me, Herr Concertmeister—trust

to me," said she, with the usual imperial wave of her hand, as she at last moved aside from the doorway which she had blocked up, and allowed us to pass out. A last wave of the hand from Eugen to Sigmund, and then we hurried away to the station. We were bound for Cologne, where that year the Lower Rhine *Musikfest* was to be held. It was then somewhat past the middle of April, and the Fest came off at Whitsuntide, in the middle of May. We, amongst others, were engaged to strengthen the Cologne orchestra for the occasion, and we were bidden this morning to the first Probe.

We just caught our train, seeing one or two faces of comrades we knew, and in an hour were in Köln.

"The Tower of Babel," and Raff's Fifth Symphonie, that called "Lenore," were the subjects we had been summoned to practise. They, together with Beethoven's Choral Fantasia and some solos were to come off on the third evening of the *Fest*.

The Probe lasted a long time: it was three o'clock when we left the Concert Hall, after five hours' hard work.

“Come along, Eugen,” cried I, “we have just time to catch the three ten, but only just.”

“Don’t wait for me,” he answered, with an absent look. “I don’t think I shall come by it. Look after yourself, Friedel, and *Auf Wiedersehen!*”

I was scarcely surprised, for I had seen that the music had deeply moved him, and I can understand the wish of any man to be alone with the remembrance or continuance of such emotions. Accordingly I took my way to the station, and there met one or two of my Elberthal comrades, who had been on the same errand as myself, and, like me, were returning home.

Lively remarks upon the probable features of the coming *Fest*, and the circulation of any amount of loose and hazy gossip respecting composers and soloists followed, and we all went to our usual Restauration and dined together. There was an opera that night to which we had Probe that afternoon, and I scarcely had time to rush home and give a look at Sigmund before it was time to go again to the theatre.

Eugen's place remained empty. For the first time since he had come into the orchestra he was absent from his post, and I wondered what could have kept him.

Taking my way home, very tired, with fragments of airs from *Czar und Zimmermann*, in which I had just been playing, the "March" from "Lenore," and scraps of choruses and airs from the *Thurm zu Babel*, all ringing in my head in a confused jumble, I sprang up the stairs (up which I used to plod so wearily and so spiritlessly), and went into the sitting-room. Darkness! After I had stood still and gazed about for a time, my eyes grew accustomed to the obscurity. I perceived that a dim grey light still stole in at the open window, and that some one reposing in an easy-chair was faintly shadowed out against it.

"Is that you, Friedhelm?" asked Eugen's voice.

"*Lieber Himmel!* Are you there? What are you doing in the dark?"

"Light the lamp, my Friedel! Dreams belong to darkness, and facts to light. Some-

times I wish light and facts had never been invented."

I found the lamp and lighted it, carried it up to him, and stood before him, contemplating him curiously. He lay back in our one easy-chair, his hands clasped behind his head, his legs outstretched. He had been idle for the first time, I think, since I had known him. He had been sitting in the dark, not even pretending to do anything.

"There *are* things new under the sun," said I, in mingled amusement and amaze. "Absent from your post, to the alarm and surprise of all who know you, here I find you mooning in the darkness, and when I illuminate you, you smile up at me in a somewhat imbecile manner, and say nothing. What may it portend?"

He reposed himself, sat up, and looked at me with an ambiguous half smile.

"Most punctual of men! most worthy, honest, fidgety old friend," said he, with still the same suppressed smile, "how I honour you! How I wish I could emulate you! How I wish I were like you! and yet,

Friedel, old boy, you have missed something this afternoon."

"So! I should like to know what you have been doing. Give an account of yourself."

"I have erred and gone astray, and have found it pleasant. I have done that which I ought not to have done, and am sorry, for the sake of morality and propriety, to have to say that it was delightful; far more delightful than to go on doing just what one ought to do. Say, good Mentor, does it matter? For this occasion only. Never again, as I am a living man."

"I wish you would speak plainly," said I, first putting the lamp and then myself upon the table. I swung my legs about and looked at him.

"And not go on telling you stories like that of *Münchhausen*, in Arabesks, eh? I will be explicit; I will use the indicative mood, present tense. Now then. I like Cologne; I like the cathedral of that town; I like the Hôtel du Nord; and, above all, I love the railway station."

"Are you raving?"

“Did you ever examine the Cologne railway station?” he went on, lighting a cigar. “There is a great big waiting-room, which they lock up; there is a delightful place in which you may get lost, and find yourself suddenly alone in a deserted wing of the building, with an impertinent porter, who doesn’t understand one word of Eng—of your native tongue——”

“Are you *mad*?” was my varied comment.

“And while you are in the greatest distress, separated from your friends, who have gone on to Elberthal (like mine), and struggling to make this porter understand you, you may be encountered by a mooning individual—a native of the land—and you may address him. He drives the fumes of music from his brain, and looks at you, and finds you charming—more than charming. My dear Friedhelm, ‘the look in your eye is quite painful to see.’ By the exercise of a little diplomacy, which, as you are charmingly *naïve*, you do not see through, he manages to seal an alliance by which you and he agree to pass three or four hours in each other’s society, for mutual instruction and entertain-

ment. The entertainment consists of cutlets, potatoes—the kind called *Kartoffeln frites*, which they give you very good at the *Nord*—and the wine known to us as Doctorberger. The instruction is varied, and is carried on chiefly in the aisle of the Kölner Dom, to the sound of music. And when he is quite spell-bound, in a magic circle, a kind of golden net or cloud, he pulls out an earthly watch, made of dust and dross ('More fool he,' your eye says, and you are quite right), and sees that time is advancing. A whole army of horned things with stings, called feelings of propriety, honour, correctness, the right thing, etc., come in thick battalions in *Sturmschritt* upon him, and with a hasty word he hurries her—he gets off to the station. There is still an hour, for both are coming to Elberthal—an hour of unalloyed delight; then"—he snapped his fingers—"a droschke, an address, a crack of the whip, and *ade!*"

I sat and stared at him while he wound up this rhodomontade by singing :

"Ade, ade, ade !

Ja, Scheiden und Meiden thut Weh !"

“You are too young and fair,” he presently resumed, “too slight and sober for apoplexy ; but a painful fear seizes me that your mental faculties are under some slight cloud. There is a vacant look in your usually radiant eye ; a want of intelligence in the curve of your rosy lip——”

“Eugen ! Stop that string of fantastic rubbish ! Where have you been, and what have you been doing ?”

“I have *not* deserved that from you. Haven’t I been telling you all this time where I have been and what I have been doing ? There is a brutality in your behaviour which is to a refined mind most lamentable.”

“But *where* have you been, and *what* have you done ?”

“Another time, *mein Lieber* — another time !”

With this misty promise I had to content myself. I speculated upon the subject for that evening, and came to the conclusion that he had invented the whole story, to see whether I would believe it (for we had all a reprehensible habit of that kind) ; and very

soon the whole circumstance dropped from my memory.

On the following morning I had occasion to go to the public Eye Hospital. Eugen and I had interested ourselves to procure a ticket for free, or almost free, treatment as an out-patient for a youth whom we knew—one of the second violins—whose sight was threatened, and who, poor boy, could not afford to pay for proper treatment. Eugen being busy, I went to receive the ticket.

It was the first time I had been in the place. I was shown into a room with the light somewhat obscured, and there had to wait some few minutes. Every one had something the matter with his or her eyes—at least, so I thought, until my own fell upon a girl who leaned, looking a little tired and a little disappointed, against a tall desk at one side of the room.

She struck me on the instant, as no feminine appearance had ever struck me before. She, like myself, seemed to be waiting for some one or something. She was tall and supple in figure, and her face was girlish and very innocent-looking; and yet, both in her

attitude and countenance, there was a little pride, some hauteur. It was evidently natural to her, and sat well upon her. A slight, but exquisitely-moulded figure, different from those of our stalwart Elberthaler *Mädchen* — finer, more refined and distinguished, and a face to dream of. I thought it then, and I say it now. Masses, almost too thick and heavy, of dark auburn hair, with here and there a glint of warmer hue, framed that beautiful face—half woman's, half child's. Dark grey eyes, with long dark lashes and brows ; cheeks naturally very pale, but sensitive, like some delicate alabaster, showing the red at every wave of emotion ; something racy, piquant, unique, enveloped the whole appearance of this young girl. I had never seen anything at all like her before.

She looked wearily round the room, and sighed a little. Then her eyes met mine ; and seeing the earnestness with which I looked at her, she turned away, and a slight—very slight—flush appeared in her cheek.

I had time to notice (for everything about her interested me) that her dress was of the

very plainest and simplest kind—so plain as to be almost poor—and its fashion not of the newest, even in Elberthal.

Then my name was called out. I received my ticket, and went to the Probe at the theatre.



CHAPTER V.

“Wishes are pilgrims to the vale of tears.”

A WEEK—ten days passed. I did not see the beautiful girl again—nor did I forget her. One night at the opera, I found her. It was *Lohengrin*—but she has told all that story herself—how Eugen came in late (he had a trick of never coming in till the last minute, and I used to think he had some reason for it)—and the recognition and the cut direct, first on her side, then on his.

Eugen and I walked home together, arm-in-arm, and I felt provoked with him.

“I say, Eugen, did you see the young lady with Vincent and the others in the first row of the Parquet?”

“ I saw some six or eight ladies of various ages in the first row of the Parquet. Some were old and some were young. One had a knitted shawl over her head, which she kept on during the whole of the performance.”

“ Don’t be so maddening. I said the young lady with Vincent, and Fräulein Sartorius. By-the-bye, Eugen, do you know, or have you ever known her ?”

“ Who ?”

“ Fräulein Sartorius.”

“ Who is she ?”

“ Oh, bother ! The young lady I mean sat exactly opposite to you and me—a beautiful young girl ; an *Engländerin*—fair, with that hair that we never see here, and——”

“ In a brown hat—sitting next to Vincent. I saw her—yes.”

“ She saw you too.”

“ She must have been blind if she hadn’t.”

“ Have you seen her before ?”

“ I have seen her before—yes.”

“ And spoken to her ?”

“ Even spoken to her.”

“ Do tell me what it all means.”

“ Nothing.”

“ But, Eugen——”

“ Are you so struck with her, Friedel ? Don’t lose your heart to her, I warn you.”

“ Why ?” I inquired wilily, hoping the answer would give me some clue to his acquaintance with her.

“ Because, *mein Bester*, she is a cut above you and me—in a different sphere—one that we know nothing about. What is more, she knows it, and shows it. Be glad that you cannot lay yourself open to the snub that I got to-night.”

There was so much bitterness in his tone that I was surprised. But a sudden remembrance flashed into my mind of his strange remarks after I had left him that day at Cologne, and I laughed to myself, nor, when he asked me, would I tell him why. That evening he had very little to say to Karl Linders and myself.

Eugen never spoke to me of the beautiful girl who had behaved so strangely that evening, though we saw her again and again.

Sometimes I used to meet her in the street, in company with the dark, plain girl, Anna Sartorius, who, I fancied, always surveyed

Eugen with a look of recognition. The two young women formed in appearance an almost startling contrast. She came to all the concerts, as if she made music a study—generally she was with a stout, good-natured-looking German Fräulein, and the young Englishman, Vincent. There was always something rather melancholy about her grace and beauty.

Most beautiful she was : with long, slender, artist-like hands, the face a perfect oval, but the features more piquant than regular—sometimes a subdued fire glowed in her eyes and compressed her lips, which removed her altogether from the category of spiritless beauties—a genus for which I never had the least taste.

One morning, Courvoisier and I, standing just within the entrance to the theatre orchestra, saw two people go by. One, a figure well enough known to every one in Elberthal, and especially to us—that of Max von Francius. Did I ever say that Von Francius was an exceedingly handsome fellow, in a certain dark, clean-shaved style ?” On that occasion he was speaking with more animation than

was usual with him, and the person to whom he had unbent so far was the fair Englishwoman—that enigmatical beauty who had cut my friend at the opera. She also was looking animated and very beautiful: her face turned to his with a smile—a glad, gratified smile. He was saying:

“But in the next lesson, you know——”

They passed on. I turned, to ask Eugen if he had seen. I needed not to put the question. He *had* seen. There was a forced smile upon his lips. Before I could speak he had said:

“It’s time to go in, Friedel; come along!” With which he turned into the theatre, and I followed thoughtfully.

Then it was rumoured that at the coming concert—the benefit of Von Francius—a new soprano was to appear—a young lady of whom report used varied tones: some believable facts at least we learnt about her. Her name, they said, was Wedderburn; she was an Englishwoman, and had a most wonderful voice. The Herr Direktor took a very deep interest in her; he not only gave her lessons; he had *asked* to give her lessons, and intended

to form of her an artiste who should one day be to the world a kind of Patti, Lucca, or Nilsson.

I had no doubt in my own mind as to who she was, but for all that I felt considerable excitement on the evening of the Hauptprobe to the *Verlorenes Paradies*.

Yes—I was right. Miss Wedderburn, the pupil of Von Francius, of whom so much was prophesied, *was* the beautiful forlorn-looking English girl. The feeling which grew upon me that evening, and which I never found reason afterwards to alter, was that she was modest, gentle, yet spirited, very gifted, and an artiste by nature and gift, yet sadly ill at ease and out of place in that world into which Von Francius wished to lead her.

She sat quite near to Eugen and me, and I saw how alone she was, and how she seemed to feel her loneliness. I saw how certain young ladies drew themselves together, and looked at her (it was on this occasion that I first began to notice the silent behaviour of women towards each other, and the more I have observed, the more has my

wonder grown and increased), and whispered behind their music, and shrugged their shoulders when Von Francius, seeing how isolated she seemed, bent forward and said a few kind words to her.

I liked him for it. After all, he was a man. But his distinguishing the child did not add to the delights of her position—rather made it worse. I put myself in her place as well as I could, and felt her feelings when Von Francius introduced her to one of the young ladies near her, who first stared at him, then at her, then inclined her head a little forward and a little backward, turned her back upon Miss Wedderburn, and appeared lost in conversation of the deepest importance with her neighbour. And I thought of the words which Karl Linders had said to us in haste and anger, after a disappointment he had lately had, "*Das Weib ist der Teufel.*" Yes, Woman is the Devil sometimes, thought I, and a mean kind of devil too. A female Mephistopheles would not have damned Gretchen's soul, nor killed her body; she would have left the latter on this earthly sphere, and damned her reputation.

Von Francius was a clever man, but he made a grand mistake that night, unless he were desirous of making his protégée as uncomfortable as possible. How could those ladies feel otherwise than insulted at seeing the man of ice so suddenly attentive and bland to a nobody, an upstart, and a beautiful one ?

The Probe continued, and still she sat alone and unspoken to, her only acquaintance or companion seeming to be Fräulein Sartorius, with whom she had come in. I saw how, when Von Francius called upon her to do her part, and the looks which had hitherto been averted from her were now turned pitilessly and unwinkingly upon her, she quailed. She bit her lip ; her hand trembled. I turned to Eugen with a look which said volumes. He sat with his arms folded, and his face perfectly devoid of all expression, gazing straight before him.

Miss Wedderburn might have been satisfied to the full with her revenge. That was a voice ! such a volume of pure, exquisite melody as I had rarely heard. After hearing that, all doubts were settled. The gift might

be a blessing or a curse—let every one decide that for himself, according to his style of thinking—but it was there. She possessed the power which put her out of the category of commonplace, and had the most melodious *Open, Sesame!* with which to besiege the doors of the courts in which dwell artists—creative and interpretative.

The performance finished the gap between her and her companions. Their looks said, “You are not one of us.” My angry spirit said, “No ; you can never be like her.”

She seemed half afraid of what she had done when it was over, and shrank into herself with downcast eyes and nervous quivering of the lips at the subdued applause of the men. I wanted to applaud too, but I looked at Eugen. I had instinctively given him some share in the affairs of this lovely creature—a share which he always strenuously repudiated, both tacitly and openly.

Nevertheless, when I saw him I abstained from applauding, knowing, by a lightning-quick intuition, that it would be highly irritating to him. He showed no emotion ; if he had done, I should not have thought the

occasion was anything special to him. It was his absurd gravity, stony inexpressiveness, which impressed me with the fact that he *was* moved—moved against his will and his judgment. He could no more help approving both of her and her voice than he could help admiring a perfect, half-opened rose.

It was over, and we went out of the Saal, across the road, and home.

Sigmund, who had not been very well that day, was awake, and restless. Eugen took him up, wrapped him in a little bed-gown, carried him into the other room, and sat down with him. The child rested his head on the loved breast, and was soothed.

* * * * *

She had gone ; the door had closed after her. Eugen turned to me, and took Sigmund into his arms again.

“ *Mein Vater*, who is the beautiful lady, and why did you speak so harshly to her ? Why did you make her cry ? ”

The answer, though ostensibly spoken to Sigmund, was a revelation to *me*.

“That I may not have to cry myself,” said Eugen, kissing him.

“Could the lady make thee cry?” demanded Sigmund, sitting up, much excited at the idea.

Another kiss and a half laugh was the answer. Then he bade him go to sleep, as he did not understand what he was talking about.

By-and-by Sigmund did drop to sleep. Eugen carried him to his bed, tucked him up, and returned. We sat in silence—such an uncomfortable, constrained silence, as had never before been between us. I had a book before me. I saw no word of it. I could not drive the vision away—the lovely, pleading face, the penitence. Good heavens! How *could* he repulse her as he had done? Her repeated request that he would take that money—what did it all mean? And, moreover, my heart was sore that he had concealed it all from me. About the past I felt no resentment; there was a secret there which I respected; but I was cut up at this. The more I thought of it, the keener was the pain I felt.

“Friedel!”

I looked up. Eugen was leaning across the table, and his hand was stretched towards me; his eyes looked full into mine. I answered his look, but I was not clear yet.

“Forgive me!”

“Forgive thee what?”

“This playing with thy confidence.”

“Don’t mention it,” I forced myself to say, but the sore feeling still remained. “You have surely a right to keep your affairs to yourself if you choose.”

“You will not shake hands? Well, perhaps I have no right to ask it; but I should like to tell you all about it.”

I put my hand into his.

“I was wounded,” said I, “it is true. But it is over.”

“Then listen, Friedel!”

He told me the story of his meeting with Miss Wedderburn. All he said of the impression she had made upon him was :

“I thought her very charming, and the loveliest creature I had ever seen. And

about the trains. It stands in this way. I thought a few hours of her society would make me very happy, and would be like—oh, well ! I knew that in the future, if she ever *should* see me again, she would either treat me with distant politeness as an inferior, or, supposing she discovered that I had cheated her, would cut me dead. And as it did not matter, as I could not possibly be an acquaintance of hers in the future, I gave myself that pleasure then. It has turned out a mistake on my part, but that is nothing new ; my whole existence has been a monstrous mistake. However, now she sees what a churl's nature was under my fair-seeming exterior, her pride will show her what to do. She will take a wrong view of my character, but what *does* that signify ? She will say that to be deceitful first and uncivil afterwards are the main features of the German character, and when she is at Cologne on her honeymoon, she will tell her bridegroom about this adventure, and he will remark that the fellow wanted horsewhipping, and she——”

“ There ! You have exercised your imagination quite sufficiently. Then you intend

to keep up this farce of not recognising her. Why ?”

He hesitated, looked as nearly awkward as he could, and said a little constrainedly :

“ Because I think it will be for the best.”

“ For you or for her ?” I inquired, not very fairly, but I could not resist it.

Eugen flushed all over his face.

“ What a question !” was all he said.

“ I do not think it such a remarkable question. Either you have grown exceedingly nervous as to your own strength of resistance, or you fear for hers.”

“ Friedhelm,” said he in a cutting voice, “ that is a tone which I should not have believed you capable of taking. It is vulgar, my dear fellow, and uncalled for ; and it is so unlike you that I am astonished. If you had been one of the other fellows——”

I fired up.

“ Excuse me, Eugen, it might be vulgar if I were merely chaffing you, but I’m not ; and I think, after what you have told me, that I have said very little. I am not so sure of her despising you. She looks much more as if she were distressed at your despising her.”

“Pre—pos—ter—ous!”

“If you can mention an instance in her behaviour this evening which looked as if she were desirous of snubbing you, I should be obliged by your mentioning it,” I continued.

“Well—well——”

“Well—well. If she had wished to snub you she would have sent you that money through the post, and made an end of it. She simply desired, as was evident all along, to apologise for having been rude to a person who had been kind to her. *I* can quite understand it, and I am not sure that your behaviour will not have the very opposite effect to that you expect.”

“I think you are mistaken. However, it does not matter; our paths lie quite apart. She will have plenty of other things to take up her time and thoughts. Anyhow I am glad that you and I are quits once more.”

So was I. We said no more upon the subject, but I always felt as if a kind of connecting link existed between my friend and me, and that beautiful, solitary English girl.

The link was destined to become yet closer. The concert was over at which she sang.

She had a success. I see she has not mentioned it; a success which isolated her still more from her companions, inasmuch as it made her more distinctly professional and them more severely virtuous.

One afternoon, when Eugen and I happened to have nothing to do, we took Sigmund to the Grafenberg. We wandered about in the fir-wood, and at last came to a pause and rested. Eugen lay upon his back and gazed up into the thickness of brown-green fir above, and perhaps guessed at the heaven beyond the dark shade. I sat and stared before me through the straight red-brown stems across the ground,

“With sheddings from the pining umbrage tinged,”

to an invisible beyond which had charms for me, and was a kind of symphonic beauty in my mind. Sigmund lay flat upon his stomach, kicked his heels, and made intricate patterns with the fir needles, while he hummed a gentle song to himself in a small, sweet voice, true as a lark's, but sadder. There was utter stillness and utter calm all round.

Presently Eugen's arm stole around Sig-

mund and drew him closer and closer to him, and they continued to look at each other until a mutual smile broke upon both faces, and the boy said, his whole small frame as well as his voice quivering (the poor little fellow had nerves that vibrated to the slightest emotion): "I love thee."

A light leaped into the father's eyes: a look of pain followed it quickly.

"And I shall never leave thee," said Sigmund.

Eugen parried the necessity of speaking by a kiss.

"I love thee too, Friedel," continued he, taking my hand. "We are very happy together, aren't we?" And he laughed placidly to himself.

Eugen, as if stung by some tormenting thought, sprang up, and we left the wood.

Oh, far back, bygone day! There was a soft light over you shed by a kindly sun. That was a time in which joy ran a golden thread through the grey homespun of everyday life.

Back to the restauration at the foot of the Berg where Sigmund was supplied with milk

and Eugen and I with beer, where we sat at a little wooden table in a garden and the pleasant clack of friendly conversation sounded around; where the women tried to make friends with Sigmund, and the girls whispered behind their coffee-cups, or (*pace*, elegant fiction!) their beer-glasses, and always happened to be looking up if our eyes roved that way. Two poor *Musiker* and a little boy : persons of no importance whatever, who could scrape their part in the symphonie with some intelligence, and feel they had done their duty. Well, well ! it is not all of us who can do even so much. I know some instruments that are always out of tune. Let us be complacent where we justly can. The opportunities are few.

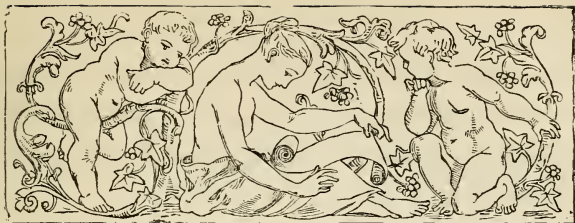
We took our way home. The days were long, and it was yet light when we returned and found the reproachful face of Frau Schmidt looking for us, and her arms open to receive the weary little lad who had fallen asleep on his father's shoulder.

I went upstairs, and, by a natural instinct, to the window. Those facing it were open : some one moved in the room. Two chords

of a piano were struck. Some one came and stood by the window, shielded her eyes from the rays of the setting sun which streamed down the street and looked westwards. Eugen was passing behind me. I pulled him to the window, and we both looked—silently, gravely.

The girl dropped her hand : her eyes fell upon us. The colour mounted to her cheek : she turned away and went to the interior of the room. It was May Wedderburn.

“*Also !*” said Eugen, after a pause. “A new neighbour ; it reminds me of one of Andersen’s *Märchen*, but I don’t know which.”



BOOK IV.

CHILDREN OF THE WORLD.

CHAPTER I.

“ For though he lived aloof from ken,
The world’s unwitnessed denizen,
The love within him stirs
Abroad, and with the hearts of men
His own confers.”

“ **T**HE story of my life from day to day ” was dull enough, same enough for some time after I went to live at the Wehrhahn. I was studying hard, and my only variety was the letters I had from home ; not very cheering, these. One, which I received from Adelaide, puzzled me somewhat. After speaking of

her coming marriage in a way which made me sad and uncomfortable, she condescended to express her approval of what I was doing, and went on :

“I am Catholic in my tastes. I suppose all our friends would faint at the idea of there being a ‘singer’ in the family. Now, I should rather like you to be a singer—only be a great one—not a little twopenny-half-penny person who has to advertise for engagements.

“Now I am going to give you some advice. This Herr von Francius—your teacher or whatever he is. Be cautious what you are about with him. I don’t say more, but I say that again. Be cautious ! Don’t burn your fingers. Now, I have not much time, and I hate writing letters, as you know. In a week I am to be married, and then—*nous verrons*. We go to Paris first, and then on to Rome, where we shall winter—to gratify *my* taste, I wonder, or Sir Peter’s, for mouldering ruins, ancient pictures, and the Coliseum by moonlight ? I have no doubt that we shall do our duty by the respectable old structures. Remember

what I said, and write to me now and then.—A.”

I frowned and puzzled a little over this letter. Be cautious? In what possible way could I be cautious? What need could there be for it when all that passed between me and Von Francius was the daily singing lesson at which he was so strict and severe, sometimes so sharp and cutting with me. I saw him then: I saw him also at the constant Proben to concerts whose season had already begun; Proben to the *Passions-musik*, the Messiah, etc. At one or two of these concerts I was to sing. I did not like the idea, but I could not make Von Francius see it as I did. He said I must sing—it was part of my studies, and I was fain to bend to his will.

Von Francius—I looked at Adelaide's letter, and smiled again. Von Francius had kept his word: he had behaved to me as a kind elder brother. He seemed instinctively to understand the wish, which was very strong on my part, not to live entirely at Miss Hallam's expense—to provide, partially at any rate, for myself, if possible. He

helped me to do this. Now he brought me some music to be copied : now he told me of a young lady who wanted lessons in English—now of one little thing—now of another, which kept me, to my pride and joy, in such slender pocket-money as I needed. Truly, I used to think in those days, it does not need much money nor much room for a person like me to keep her place in the world. I wished to trouble no one—only to work as hard as I could, and do the work that was set for me as well as I knew how. I had my wish, and so far was not unhappy.

But what did Adelaide mean ? True, I had once described Von Francius to her as young, that is youngish, clever, and handsome. Did she, remembering my well-known susceptibility, fear that I might fall in love with him, and compromise myself by some silly *Schwärmerei* ? I laughed aloud all by myself, at the very idea of such a thing. Fall in love with Von Francius, and—my eyes fell upon the two windows over the way. No : my heart was pure of the faintest feeling for him, save that of respect, grati-

tude, and liking founded at that time more on esteem than spontaneous growth. And he—I smiled at that idea too.

In all my long interviews with Von Francius, throughout our intercourse he maintained one unvaried tone, that of a kind, frank, protecting interest, with something of the patron on his part. He would converse with me about Schiller and Göthe, true; he would also caution me against such and such shopkeepers as extortioners, and tell me the place where they gave the largest discount on music paid for on the spot: would discuss the *Waldstein* or *Appassionata* with me, or the beauties of Rubinstein or the deep meanings of Schumann, also the relative cost of living *en pension* or providing for oneself.

No. Adelaide was mistaken. I wished parenthetically that she could make the acquaintance of Von Francius, and learn *how* mistaken—and again my eyes fell upon the opposite windows. Friedhelm Helfen leaned from one, holding fast Courvoisier's boy. The rich Italian colouring of the lovely young face; the dusky hair; the glow upon

the cheeks, the deep blue of his serge dress, made the effect of a warmly-tinted southern flower : it was a flower-face too ; delicate and rich at once.

Adelaide's letter dropped unheeded to the floor. Those two could not see me, and I had a joy in watching them.

To say, however, that I actually watched my opposite neighbours would not be true. I studiously avoided watching them : never sat in the window ; seldom showed myself at it, though in passing I sometimes allowed myself to linger and so had glimpses of those within. They were three and I was one. They were the happier by two. Or if I knew that they were out, that a Probe was going on, or an opera or concert, there was nothing that I liked better than to sit for a time and look to the opposite windows. They were nearly always open as were also mine, for the heat of the stove was oppressive to me, and I preferred to temper it with a little of the raw outside air. I used sometimes to hear from those opposite rooms the practising or playing of passages on the violin and violoncello—scales, shakes, long

complicated flourishes and phrases. Sometimes I heard the very strains that I had to sing to. Airs, scraps of airs, snatches from operas, concertos and symphonies. They were always humming and singing things. They came home haunted with "The Last Rose," from *Marta*—now some air from *Faust*, *Der Freischütz*, or *Tannhäuser*.

But one air was particular to Eugen, who seemed to be perfectly possessed by it—that which I had heard him humming when I first met him—the March from *Lenore*. He whistled it and sang it; played it on violin, 'cello and piano; hummed it first thing in the morning and last thing at night; harped upon it until in despair his companion threw books and music at him, and he, dodging them, laughed, begged pardon, was silent for five minutes, and then the March *da Capo*, set in a halting kind of measure to the ballad.

By way of a slight and wholesome variety there was the whole repertory of *Volkslieder*, from

"Du, du, liegst mir im Herzen ;
Du, du, liegst mir im Sinn,"

up to

“Mädele, ruck, ruck, ruck
An meine grüne Seite.”

Sometimes they—one or both of them with the boy—might be seen at the window leaning out, whistling or talking. When doors banged and quick steps rushed up or down the stairs two steps at a time I knew it was Courvoisier. Friedhelm Helfen's movements were slower and more sedate. I grew to know his face as well as Eugen's, and to like it better the more I saw of it. A quite young, almost boyish face, with an inexpressibly pure, true, and *good* expression upon the mouth and in the dark brown eyes. Reticent, as most good faces are, but a face which made you desire to know the owner of it, made you feel that you could trust him in any trial. His face reminded me in a distant manner of two others, also faces of musicians, but greater in their craft than he, they being creators and pioneers, while he was only a disciple, of Beethoven and of the living master, Rubinstein. A gentle, though far from weak face, and such a contrast in expression and everything else to that of my musician, as to

make me wonder sometimes whether they had been drawn to each other from very oppositeness of disposition and character. That they were very great friends I could not doubt; that the leadership was on Courvoisier's side was no less evident. Eugen's affection for Helfen seemed to have something fatherly in it, while I could see that both joined in an absorbing worship of the boy, who was a very Croesus in love if in nothing else. Sigmund had, too, an adorer in a third musician, a violoncellist, one of their comrades, who apparently spent much of his spare substance in purchasing presents of toys and books and other offerings, which he laid at the shrine of Saint Sigmund, with what success I could not tell. Beyond this young fellow Karl Linders, they had not many visitors. Young men used occasionally to appear with violin-cases in their hands, coming for lessons, probably.

All these things I saw without absolutely watching for them; they made that impression upon me which the most trifling facts connected with a person around whom cling all one's deepest pleasures and deepest pains ever

do and must make. I was glad to know them, but at the same time they impressed the loneliness and aloofness of my own life more decidedly upon me.

I remember one small incident which at the time it happened struck home to me. My windows were open; it was an October afternoon, mild and sunny. The yellow light shone with a peaceful warmth upon the afternoon quietness of the street. Suddenly that quietness was broken. The sound of music, the peculiar blatant noise of trumpets smote the air. It came nearer, and with it the measured tramp of feet. I rose and went to look out. A Hussar regiment was passing; before them was borne a soldier's coffin: they carried a comrade to his grave. The music they played was the "Funeral March for the Death of a Hero," from the *Sinfonia Eroica*. Muffled, slow, grand, and mournful, it went wailing and throbbing by. The procession passed slowly on in the October sunshine, along the *Schadowstrasse*, turning off by the *Hofgarten*, and so on to the cemetery. I leaned out of the window and looked after it—forgotten all outside, till just as the last of

the procession passed by my eyes fell upon Courvoisier going into his house, and who presently entered the room. He was unperceived by Friedhelm and Sigmund, who were looking after the procession. The child's face was earnest, almost solemn—he had not seen his father come up. I saw Helfen's lips caress Sigmund's loose black hair that waved just beneath them.

Then I saw a figure—only a black shadow to my eyes which were dazzled by the sun—come behind them. One hand was laid upon Helfen's shoulder, another turned the child's chin. What a change ! Friedhelm's grave face smiled : Sigmund sprang aside, made a leap to his father who stooped to him, and clasping his arms tight round his neck was raised up in his arms.

They were all satisfied—all smiling—all happy. I turned away. That was a home—that was a meeting of three affections. What more *could* they want ? I shut the window—shut it all out, and myself with it into the cold, feeling my lips quiver. It was very fine, this life of independence and self-support, but it was dreadfully lonely.

The days went on. Adelaide was now Lady Le Marchant. She had written to me again, and warned me once more to be careful what I was about. She had said that she liked her life—at least she said so in her first two or three letters, and then there fell a sudden utter silence about herself, which seemed to me ominous.

Adelaide had always acted upon the assumption that Sir Peter was a far from strong-minded individual, with a certain hardness and cunning perhaps, in relation to money matters, but nothing that a clever wife with a strong enough sense of her own privileges could not overcome.

She said nothing to me about herself. She told me about Rome; who were there; what they did and looked like; what she wore; what compliments were paid to her—that was all.

Stella told me my letters were dull—and I dare say they were—and that there was no use in her writing, because nothing ever happened in Skernford, which was also true.

And for Eugen, we were on exactly the

same terms—or rather no terms—as before. Opposite neighbours, and as far removed as if we had lived at the antipodes.

My life, as time went on, grew into a kind of fossilised dream, in which I rose up and lay down, practised so many hours a day, ate and drank and took my lesson, and it seemed as if I had been living so for years, and should continue to live on so to the end of my days—until one morning my eyes would not open again, and for me the world would have come to an end.



CHAPTER II.

And nearer still shall farther be,
And words shall plague and vex and buffet thee.

IT was December, close upon Christmas. Winter at last in real earnest. A black frost. The earth bound in fetters of iron. The land grey; the sky steel; the wind a dagger. The trees, leafless and stark, rattled their shrivelled boughs together in that wind.

It met you at corners and froze the words out of your mouth; it whistled a low, fiendish, malignant whistle round the houses; as vicious, and little louder than the buzz of a mosquito. It swept, thin, keen and cutting, down the Königsallée, and blew fine black dust into one's face.

It cut up the skaters upon the pond in the *Neue Anlage*, which was in the centre of the town, and comparatively sheltered ; but it was in its glory whistling across the flat fields leading to the great skating-ground of Elberthal in general—the *Schwanenspiegel* at the Grafenbergerdahl.

The Grafenberg was a low chain of what, for want of a better name, may be called hills, lying to the north of Elberthal. The country all around this unfortunate apology for a range of hills was, if possible, flatter than ever. The Grafenbergerdahl was, properly, no “dale” at all, but a broad plain of meadows, with the railway cutting them at one point ; then diverging and running on under the Grafenberg.

One vast meadow which lay, if possible, a trifle lower than the rest, was flooded regularly by the autumn rains, but not deeply. It was frozen over now, and formed a model skating-place, and so, apparently, thought the townspeople, for they came out, singly or in bodies, and from nine in the morning till dusk, the place was crowded, and the

merry music of the iron on the ice ceased not for a second.

I discovered this place of resort by accident one day, when I was taking a constitutional, and found myself upon the borders of the great frozen mere, covered with skaters. I stood looking at them, and my blood warmed at the sight. If there were one thing—one accomplishment upon which I prided myself, it was this very one—skating.

In a drawing-room I might feel awkward—confused amongst clever people, bashful amongst accomplished ones; shy about music and painting, diffident as to my voice, and deprecatory in spirit as to the etiquette to be observed at a dinner-party. Give me my skates and put me on a sheet of ice, and I was at home.

As I paused and watched the skaters, it struck me that there was no reason at all why I should deny myself *that* seasonable enjoyment. I had my skates, and the mere was large enough to hold me as well as the others—indeed, I saw in the distance great tracts of virgin ice to which no skater seemed yet to have reached.

I went home, and, on the following afternoon, carried out my resolution ; though it was after three o'clock before I could set out.

A long, bleak way. First up the merry *Jägerhofstrasse*, then through the *Malkasten* garden, up a narrow lane, then out upon the open, bleak road, with that bitter wind going ping-ping at one's ears and upon one's cheek. Through a big gateway, and a courtyard pertaining to an orphan asylum—along a lane bordered with apple trees, through a rustic arch, and, hurrah ! the field was before me—not so thickly covered as yesterday, for it was getting late, and the Elberthalers did not seem to understand the joy of careering over the black ice by moonlight, in the night-wind. It was, however, as yet far from dark, and the moon was rising in silver yonder, in a sky of a pale but clear blue.

I quickly put on my skates—stumbled to the edge, and set off. I took a few turns, circling amongst the people—then, seeing several turn to look at me, I fixed my eyes upon a distant clump of reeds rising from the ice, and resolved to make it my goal. I

could only just see it, even with my long-sighted eyes, but struck out for it bravely. Past group after group of the skaters who turned to look at my scarlet shawl as it flashed past. I glanced at them and skimmed smoothly on, till I came to the outside circle where there was a skater all alone, his hands thrust deep into his great-coat pockets, the collar of the same turned high about his ears, and the inevitable little grey cloth *Studentenhut* crowning the luxuriance of waving dark hair. He was gliding round in complicated figures and circles, doing the outside edge for his own solitary gratification, so far as I could see; active, graceful, and muscular, with practised ease and assured strength in every turn of every limb. It needed no second glance on my part to assure me who he was—even if the dark bright eyes had not been caught by the flash of my cloak, and gravely raised for a moment as I flew by. I dashed on, breasting the wind. To reach the bunch of reeds seemed more than ever desirable now. I would make it my sole companion until it was time to go away. At least he had seen me, and I was safe from

any *contretemps*—he would avoid me as strenuously as I avoided him. But the first fresh lust after pleasure was gone. Just one moment's glance into a face had had the power to alter everything so much. I skated on, as fast, as surely as ever, but :

“A joy has taken flight.”

The pleasant sensation of solitude, which I could so easily have felt amongst a thousand people had he not been counted amongst them, was gone. The roll of my skates upon the ice had lost its music for me : the wind felt colder—I sadder. At least I thought so. Should I go away again now that this disturbing element had appeared upon the scene ? No, no, no, said something eagerly within me, and I bit my lip, and choked back a kind of sob of disgust as I realised that despite my gloomy reflections my heart was beating a high, rapid march of—joy ! as I skimmed, all alone, far away from the crowd, amongst the dismal withered reeds, and round the little islets of stiffened grass and rushes, which were frozen upright in their places.

The daylight faded, and the moon rose.

The people were going away. The distant buzz of laughter had grown silent. I could dimly discern some few groups, but very few, still left, and one or two solitary figures. Even my preternatural eagerness could not discern who they were. The darkness, the long walk home, the Probe at seven, which I should be too tired to attend, all had quite slipped from my mind : it was possible that amongst those figures which I still dimly saw, was yet remaining that of Courvoisier, and surely there was no harm in my staying here.

I struck out in another direction, and flew on in the keen air ; the frosty moon shedding a weird light upon the black ice : I saw the railway lines, polished, gleaming too in the light : the belt of dark firs to my right : the red sand soil frozen hard and silvered over with frost. Flat and tame, but still beautiful. I felt a kind of rejoicing in it : I felt it home. I was probably the first person who had been there since the freezing of the mere, thought I, and that idea was soon converted to a certainty in my mind, for in a second my rapid career was interrupted. At the

farthest point from help or human presence the ice gave way with a crash, and I shrieked aloud at the shock of the bitter water. Oh, how cold it was ! how piercing, frightful, numbing ! It was not deep—scarcely above my knees, but the difficulty was how to get out. Put my hand where I would the ice gave way. I could only plunge in the icy water, feeling the sodden grass under my feet. What sort of things might there not be in that water ? A cold shudder, worse than any ice, shot through me at the idea of newts and rats and water-serpents, absurd though it was. I screamed again in desperation, and tried to haul myself out by catching at the rushes. They were rotten with the frost and gave way in my hand. I made a frantic effort at the ice again ; stumbled and fell on my knees in the water. I was wet all over now, and I gasped. My limbs ached agonisingly with the cold. I should be, if not drowned, yet benumbed, frozen to death here alone in the great mere, amongst the frozen reeds and under the steely sky.

I was pausing, standing still, and rapidly becoming almost too benumbed to think or

hold myself up, when I heard the sound of skates and the weird measure of the *Lenore* March again. I held my breath : I desired intensely to call out, shriek aloud for help, but I could not. Not a word would come.

"I *did* hear some one," he muttered, and then in the moonlight he came skating past, saw me, and stopped.

"*Sie, Fräulein!*" he began quickly, and then, altering his tone. "The ice has broken. Let me help you."

"Don't come too near ; the ice is very thin—it doesn't hold at all," I chattered, scarcely able to get the words out.

"You are cold ?" he asked, and smiled. I felt the smile cruel ; and realised that I probably looked rather ludicrous.

"*Cold !*" I repeated, with an irrepressible short sob.

He knelt down upon the ice at about a yard's distance from me.

"Here it is strong," said he, holding out his arms. "Lean this way *mein Fräulein*, and I will lift you out."

"Oh no ! You will certainly fall in yourself."

"Do as I tell you," he said imperatively,

and I obeyed, leaning a little forward. He took me round the waist, lifted me quietly out of the water, and placed me upon the ice at a discreet distance from the hole in which I had been stuck, then rose himself, apparently undisturbed by the effort.

Miserable, degraded object that I felt ! My clothes clinging round me ; icy cold, shivering from head to foot ; so aching with cold that I could no longer stand. As he opened his mouth to say something about its being “happily accomplished,” I sank upon my knees at his feet. My strength had deserted me ; I could no longer support myself.

“Frozen !” he remarked to himself, as he stooped and half raised me. “I see what must be done. Let me take off your skates —*sonst geht's nicht.*”

I sat down upon the ice, half hysterical, partly from the sense of the degrading, ludicrous plight I was in, partly from intense yet painful delight at being thus once more with him, seeing some recognition in his eyes again, and hearing some cordiality in his voice.

He unfastened my skates deftly and quickly,

slung them over his arm, and helped me up again. I essayed feebly to walk, but my limbs were numb with cold. I could not put one foot before the other, but could only cling to his arm in silence.

“So!” said he, with a little laugh. “We are all alone here! A fine time for a moon-light skating.”

“Ah! yes,” said I wearily, “but I can’t move.”

“You need not,” said he. “I am going to carry you away in spite of yourself, like a popular preacher.”

He put his arm round my waist, and bade me hold fast to his shoulder. I obeyed, and directly found myself carried along in a swift delightful movement, which seemed to my drowsy, deadened senses, quick as the nimble air, smooth as a swallow’s flight. He was a consummate master in the art of skating—that was evident. A strong, unfailing arm held me fast. I felt no sense of danger, no fear lest he should fall or stumble; no such idea entered my head.

We had far to go—from one end of the great *Schwanenspiegel* to the other. Despite

the rapid motion, numbness overcame me ; my eyes closed, my head sank upon my hands, which were clasped over his shoulder. A sob rose to my throat. In the midst of the torpor that was stealing over me, there shot every now and then a shiver of ecstasy so keen as to almost terrify me. But then even that died away. Everything seemed to whirl round me—the meadows and trees, the stiff rushes and the great black sheet of ice, and the white moon in the inky heavens became only a confused dream. Was it sleep or faintness, or coma ? *What* was it that seemed to make my senses as dull as my limbs, and as heavy ? I scarcely felt the movement, as he lifted me from the ice to the ground. His shout did not waken me, though he sent the full power of his voice ringing out towards the pile of buildings to our left.

With the last echo of his voice I lost consciousness entirely ; all failed and faded, and then vanished before me, until I opened my eyes again feebly, and found myself in a great stony-looking room, before a big black stove, the door of which was thrown open. I was lying upon a sofa, and a woman was

bending over me. At the foot of the sofa, leaning against the wall, was Courvoisier, looking down at me, his arms folded, his face pensive.

"Oh dear!" cried I, starting up. "What is the matter? I must go home."

"You shall—when you can," said Courvoisier, smiling as he had smiled when I first knew him, before all these miserable misunderstandings had come between us.

My apprehensions were stilled. It did me good, warmed me, sent the tears trembling to my eyes, when I found that his voice had *not* resumed the old accent of ice, nor his eyes that cool, unrecognising stare which had frozen me so many a time in the last few weeks.

"*Trinken Sie 'mal, Fräulein,*" said the woman, holding a glass to my lips: it held hot spirits and water, which smoked.

"Bah!" replied I gratefully, and turning away.

"*Nee, nee!*" she repeated. "You must drink just a *Schnäppschen*, Fräulein."

I pushed it away with some disgust. Courvoisier took it from her hand and held it to me.

“Don’t be so foolish and childish. Think of your voice after this,” said he, smiling kindly; and I, with an odd sensation, choked down my tears and drank it. It was bad—despite my desire to please, I found it very bad.

“Yes, I know,” said he, with a sympathetic look, as I made a horrible face after drinking it, and he took the glass. “And now this woman will lend you some dry things. Shall I go straight to Elberthal and send a *droschke* here for you, or will you try to walk home?”

“Oh, I will walk. I am sure it would be the best—if—do you think it would?”

“Do you feel equal to it? is the question,” he answered, and I was surprised to see that though I was looking hard at him, he did not look at me, but only into the glass he held.

“Yes,” said I. “And they say that people who have been nearly drowned should always walk; it does them good.”

“In that case then,” said he, repressing a smile, “I should say it would be better for you to try. But pray make haste and

get your wet things off, or you will come to serious harm."

"I will be as quick as ever I can."

"No hurry," he replied, sitting down, and pulling one of the woman's children towards him. "Come, *mein Junger*, tell me how old you are?"

I followed the woman to an inner room, where she divested me of my dripping things, and attired me in a costume consisting of a short full brown petticoat, a blue woollen jacket, thick blue knitted stockings, and a pair of wide low shoes, which habiliments constituted the uniform of the orphan asylum of which she was matron, and belonged to her niece.

She expatiated upon the warmth of the dress, and did not produce any outer wrap or shawl, and I, only anxious to go, said nothing, but twisted up my loose hair, and went back into the large stony room before spoken of, from which a great noise had been proceeding for some time.

I stood in the doorway and saw Eugen surrounded by other children, in addition to the one he had first called to him. There

were likewise two dogs, and they—the children, the dogs, and Herr Concertmeister Courvoisier most of all—were making as much noise as they *possibly* could. I paused for a moment to have the small gratification of watching the scene. One child on his knee, and one on his shoulder pulling his hair, which was all ruffled and on end, a laugh upon his face, a dancing light in his eyes, as if he felt happy and at home amongst all the little flaxen heads.

Could he be the same man who had behaved so coldly to me? My heart went out to him in this kinder moment. Why was he so genial with those children and so harsh to me, who was little better than a child myself?

His eye fell upon me as he held a shouting and kicking child high in the air, and his own face laughed all over in mirth and enjoyment.

“Come here, Miss Wedderburn; this is Hans, there is Fritz, and here is Franz—a jolly trio, aren’t they?”

He put the child into his mother’s arms, who regarded him with an eye of approval,

and told him that it was not every one who knew how to ingratiate himself with *her* children, who were uncommonly spirited.

“Ready?” he asked, surveying me and my costume, and laughing. “Don’t you feel a stranger in these garments?”

“No! Why?”

“I should have said silk and lace and velvet, or fine muslins and embroideries, were more in your style.”

“You are quite mistaken. I was just thinking how admirably this costume suits me, and that I should do well to adopt it permanently.”

“Perhaps there was a mirror in the inner room,” he suggested.

“A mirror! Why?”

“Then your idea would quite be accounted for. Young ladies must of course wish to wear that which becomes them.”

“Very becoming!” I sneered grandly.

“Very,” he replied emphatically. “It makes me wish to be an orphan.”

“Ah, *mein Herr*,” said the woman reproachfully, for he had spoken German.

“Don’t jest about that. If you have parents——”

“No, I haven’t,” he interposed hastily.

“Or children either?”

“I should not else have understood yours so well,” he laughed. “Come, my—Miss Wedderburn, if you are ready.”

After arranging with the woman that she should dry my things and return them, receiving her own in exchange, we left the house.

It was quite moonlight now; the last faint streak of twilight had disappeared. The way that we must traverse to reach the town stretched before us, long, straight, and flat.

“Where is your shawl?” he asked suddenly.

“I left it; it was wet through.”

Before I knew what he was doing, he had stripped off his heavy overcoat, and I felt its warmth and thickness about my shoulders.

“Oh, *don’t!*” I cried in great distress, as I strove to remove it again, and looked imploringly into his face. “Don’t do that. You will get cold; you will——”

“Get *cold!*” he laughed, as if much amused, as he drew the coat around me and fastened it, making no more ado of my resisting hands than if they had been bits of straw.

“So!” said he, pushing one of my arms through the sleeve. “Now,” as he still held it fastened together, and looked half-laughingly at me, “do you intend to keep it on or not?”

“I suppose I must.”

“I call that gratitude. Take my arm—so! You are weak yet.”

We walked on in silence for some time. I was happy; for the first time since the night I had heard *Lohengrin* I was happy and at rest. True, no forgiveness had been asked or extended; but he had ceased to behave as if I were not forgiven.

“Am I not going too fast?” he inquired.

“N—no.”

“Yes, I am, I see. We will moderate the pace a little.”

We walked more slowly: Physically I was inexpressibly weary. The reaction after my drenching had set in; I felt a languor which amounted to pain, and an aching and

weakness in every limb. I tried to regret the event, but could not ; tried to wish it were not such a long walk to Elberthal, and found myself perversely regretting that it was such a short one.

At length the lights of the town came in sight. I heaved a deep sigh. Soon it would be over—"the glory and the dream."

"I think we are exactly on the way to your house, *nicht wahr?*" said he.

"Yes ; and to yours, since we are opposite neighbours."

"Yes."

"You are not as lonely as I am, though ; you have companions."

"I—oh—Friedhelm ; yes."

"And—your little boy."

"Sigmund also," was all he said.

But "*Auch Sigmund*" may express much more in German than in English. It did so then.

"And you ?" he added.

"I am alone," said I.

I did not mean to be foolishly sentimental. The sigh that followed my words was involuntary.

"So you are. But I suppose you like it?"

"Like it! What can make you think so?"

"Well, at least you have good friends."

"Have I? Oh yes, of course!" said I, thinking of Von Francius.

"Do you get on with your music?" he next inquired.

"I hope so. I—do you think it strange that I should live there all alone?" I asked, tormented with a desire to know what he did think of me, and crassly ready to burst into explanations on the least provocation. I was destined to be undeceived.

"I have not thought about it at all; it is not my business."

Snub number one. He had spoken quickly, as if to clear himself as much as possible from any semblance of interest in me.

I went on, rashly plunging into further intricacies of conversation:

"It is curious that you and I should not only live near to each other, but actually have the same profession at last."

"How?"

Snub number two. But I persevered.

“Music. Your profession is music, and mine will be.”

“I do not see the resemblance. There is little point of likeness between a young lady who is in training for a *Prima Donna* and an obscure *Musiker*, who contributes his share of shakes and runs to the Symphony.”

“I in training for a *Prima Donna*! How can you say so?”

“Do we not all know the forte of Herr von Francius? And—excuse me—are not your windows opposite to ours, and open as a rule? Can I not hear the music you practise, and shall I not believe my own ears?”

“I am sure your own ears do not tell you that a future *Prima Donna* lives opposite to you,” said I, feeling most insanely and unreasonably hurt and cut up at the idea.

“Will you tell me that you are not studying for the stage?”

“I never said I was not. I said I was not a future *Prima Donna*. My voice is not half good enough. I am not clever enough, either.”

He laughed.

“As if voice or cleverness had anything to do with it. Personal appearance and friends at Court are the chief things. I have known *Prime Donne*—seen them, I mean—and from my place below the foot-lights I have had the impertinence to judge them upon their own merits. Provided they were handsome, impudent, and unscrupulous enough, their public seemed gladly to dispense with art, cultivation, or genius in their performances and conceptions.”

“And you think that I am, or shall be in time, handsome, impudent, and unscrupulous enough,” said I, in a low, choked tone.

My fleeting joy was being thrust back by hands most ruthless. Unmixed satisfaction for even the brief space of an hour or so was not to be included in my lot.

“*Oh bewahre!*” said he, with a little laugh, that chilled me still further. “I think no such thing. The beauty is there, *mein Fräulein*—pardon me for saying so——”

Indeed, I was well able to pardon it. Had he been informing his grandmother that there were the remains of a handsome woman to be

traced in her, he could not have spoken more unenthusiastically.

"The beauty is there. The rest—as I said, when one has friends, these things are arranged for one."

"But I have no friends."

"No," with again that dry little laugh. "Perhaps they will be provided at the proper time, as Elijah was fed by the ravens. Some fine night—who knows—I may sit with my violin in the orchestra at your benefit, and one of the bouquets with which you are smothered may fall at my feet and bring me *aus der Fugue*. When that happens, will you forgive me if I break a rose from the bouquet before I toss it on to the feet of its rightful owner? I promise that I will seek for no note, nor spy out any ring or bracelet. I will only keep the rose in remembrance of the night when I skated with you across the *Schwanenspiegel*, and prophesied unto you the future. It will be a kind of 'I told you so,' on my part."

Mock sentiment, mock respect, mock admiration; a sneer in the voice, a dry sarcasm in the words. What was I to think? Why

did he veer round in this way, and from protecting kindness return to a raillery which was more cruel than his silence? My blood rose, though, at the mockingness of his tone.

"I don't know what you mean," said I coldly. "I *am* studying operatic music. If I have any success in that line, I shall devote myself to it. What is there wrong in it? The person who has her living to gain must use the talents that have been given her. My talent is my voice; it is the only thing I have—except, perhaps, some capacity to love—those—who are kind to me. I *can* do that, thank God! Beyond that I have nothing, and I did not make myself."

"A capacity to love those who are kind to you," he said hastily. "And do you love all who are kind to you?"

"Yes," said I stoutly, though I felt my face burning.

"And hate them that despitefully use you?"

"Naturally," I said, with a somewhat unsteady laugh.

A rush of my ruling feeling—propriety and decent reserve—tied my tongue, and I could not say, “Not all—not always.”

He, however, snapped, as it were, at my remark, or admission, and chose to take it as if it were in the deepest earnest; for he said, quickly, decisively, and, as I thought, with a kind of exultation:

“Ah, then *I* will be disagreeable to you.”

This remark, and the tone in which it was uttered, came upon me with a shock which I cannot express. He would be disagreeable to me because I hated those who were disagreeable to me, *ergo*, he wished me to hate him. But why? What was the meaning of the whole extraordinary proceeding?

“Why?” I asked mechanically, and asked nothing more.

“Because then you will hate me, unless you have the good sense to do so already.”

“Why? What effect will my hatred have upon you?”

“None. Not a jot. *Gar keine*. But I wish you to hate me, nevertheless.”

“So you have begun to be disagreeable to me by pulling me out of the water, lending

me your own coat, and giving me your arm all along this hard, lonely road," said I composedly.

He laughed.

"*That* was before I knew of your peculiarity. From to-morrow morning on I shall begin. I will make you hate me. I shall be glad if you hate me."

I said nothing. My head felt bewildered ; my understanding benumbed. I was conscious that I was very weary—conscious that I should like to cry, so bitter was my disappointment.

As we came within the town, I said :

"I am very sorry, Herr Courvoisier, to have given you so much trouble."

"That means that I am to put you into a cab and relieve you of my company."

"It does *not*," I ejaculated passionately, jerking my hand from his arm. "How can you say so ? How dare you say so ?"

"You might meet some of your friends, you know."

"And I tell you I have no friends except Herr von Francius, and I am not accountable to him for my actions."

“ We shall soon be at your house now.”

“ Herr Courvoisier, have you forgiven me ?”

“ Forgiven you what ?”

“ My rudeness to you once.”

“ Ah, *mein Fräulein*,” said he, shrugging his shoulders a little and smiling slightly, “ you are under a delusion about that circumstance. How can I forgive that which I never resented ?”

This was putting the matter in a new, and for me, a humbling light.

“ Never resented !” I murmured confusedly.

“ Never. Why should I resent it ? I forgot myself, *nicht wahr* ? and you showed me at one and the same time my proper place and your own excellent good sense. You did not wish to know me, and I did not resent it. I had no right to resent it.”

“ Excuse me,” said I, my voice vibrating against my will ; “ you are wrong there, and either you are purposely saying what is not true or you have not the feelings of a gentleman.” His arm sprang a little aside as I went on, amazed at my own boldness. “ I did *not* show you your ‘ proper place.’ I did

not show my own good sense. I showed my ignorance, vanity, and surprise. If you do not know that you are not what I take you for—a gentleman.”

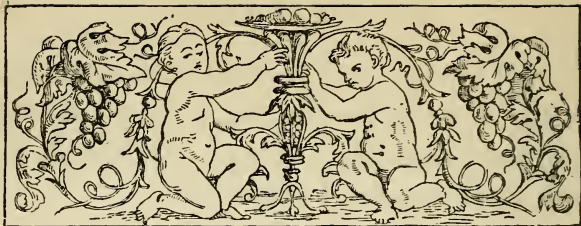
“Perhaps not,” said he, after a pause. “You certainly did not take me for one then. Why *should* I be a gentleman? What makes you suppose I am one?”

Questions which, however satisfactorily I might answer them to myself, I could not well reply to in words. I felt that I had rushed upon a topic which could not be explained, since he would not own himself offended. I had made a fool of myself and gained nothing by it. While I was racking my brains for some satisfactory closing remark, we turned a corner and came into the *Wehrhahn*. A clock struck seven.

“*Gott im Himmel!*” he exclaimed. “Seven o’clock! The opera—*da geht’s schon an!* Excuse me, Fräulein, I must go. Ah, here is your house.”

He took the coat gently from my shoulders, wished me *gute Besserung*, and ringing the bell made me a profound bow, and either not noticing or not choosing to notice the hand

which I stretched out towards him, strode off hastily towards the theatre, leaving me cold, sick, and miserable, to digest my humble pie with what appetite I might.



CHAPTER III.

CUI BONO ?

CHRISTMAS morning. And how cheerfully I spent it! I tried first of all to forget that it was Christmas, and only succeeded in impressing the fact more forcibly and vividly upon my mind, and with it others; the fact that I was alone especially predominating. And a German Christmas is not the kind of thing to let a lonely person forget his loneliness in; its very bustle and union serves to emphasise their solitude to solitary people.

I had seen such quantities of Christmas-trees go past the day before. One to every house in the neighbourhood. One had even

come here, and the widow of the piano-tuner had hung it with lights and invited some children to make merry for the feast of *Weihnachten Abend*.

Every one had had a present except me. Every one had some one with whom to spend their Christmas—except me. A little tiny Christmas-tree had gone to the rooms whose windows faced mine. I had watched its arrival; for once I had broken through my rule of not deliberately watching my neighbours, and had done so. The tree arrived in the morning. It was kept a profound mystery from Sigmund, who was relegated, much to his disgust, to the society of Frau Schmidt downstairs, who kept a vigilant watch upon him and would not let him go upstairs on any account.

The afternoon gradually darkened down. My landlady invited me to join her party downstairs; I declined. The rapturous, untutored joy of half a dozen children had no attraction for me; the hermit-like watching of the scene over the way had. I did not light my lamp. I was secure of not being disturbed; for Frau Lützler, when I would

not come to her, had sent my supper upstairs, and said she would not be able to come to me again that evening.

“So much the better!” I murmured, and put myself in a window corner.

The lights over the way were presently lighted. For a moment I trembled lest the blinds were going to be put down, and all my chance of spying spoiled. But no: my neighbours were careless fellows—not given to watching their neighbours themselves nor to suspecting other people of it. The blinds were left up, and I was free to observe all that passed.

Towards half-past five I saw by the light of the street lamp, which was just opposite, two people come into the house; a young man who held the hand of a little girl. The young man was Karl Linders the violoncellist; the little girl, I supposed, must be his sister. They went upstairs, or rather Karl went upstairs; his little sister remained below.

There was a great shaking of hands and some laughing when Karl came into the room. He produced various packages which were opened, their contents criticised, and

hung upon the tree. Then the three men surveyed their handiwork with much satisfaction. I could see the whole scene. They could not see my watching face pressed against the window, for they were in light and I was in darkness.

Friedhelm went out of the room, and, I suppose, exerted his lungs from the top of the stairs, for he came back, flushed and laughing, and presently the door opened, and Frau Schmidt, looking like the mother of the Gracchi, entered, holding a child by each hand. She never moved a muscle. She held a hand of each, and looked alternately at them. Breathless, I watched. It was almost as exciting as if I had been joining in the play—more so, for to me everything was *sur l'imprévu*—revealed piecemeal, while to them some degree of foreknowledge must exist, to deprive the ceremony of some of its charms.

There was awed silence for a time. It was a pretty scene. In the middle of the room a wooden table: upon it the small green fir, covered with little twinkling tapers: the orthodox waxen angels, and strings of

balls and bonbons hanging about—the white *Christ-kind* at the top in the arms of Father Christmas. The three men standing in a semicircle at one side : how well I could see them ! A suppressed smile upon Eugen's face, such as it always wore when pleasing other people. Friedhelm not allowing the smile to fully appear upon his countenance, but with a grave delight upon his face, and with great satisfaction beaming from his luminous brown eyes. Karl with his hands in his pockets, and an attitude by which I knew he said, "There ! what do you think of that ?" Frau Schmidt and the two children on the other side.

The tree was not a big one. The wax-lights were probably cheap ones : the gifts that hung upon the boughs or lay on the table must have been measured by the available funds of three poor musicians. But the whole affair did its mission admirably—even more effectively than an official commission to (let us say) inquire into the cause of the loss of an ironclad. It—the tree I mean, not the commission—was intended to excite joy and delight, and it did excite them to a very

high extent. It was meant to produce astonishment in unsophisticated minds—it did that too, and here it has a point in common with the proceedings of the commission respectfully alluded to.

The little girl, who was a head taller than Sigmund, had quantities of flaxen hair plaited in a pigtail and tied with light blue ribbon—new; and a sweet face which was a softened girl-miniature of her brother's. She jumped for joy, and eyed the tree and the bonbons, and everything else with irrepressible rapture. Sigmund was not given to effusive declaration of his emotion, but after gazing long and solemnly at the show, his eyes turned to his father, and the two smiled in the odd manner they had, as if at some private understanding existing between themselves. Then the festivities were considered inaugurated.

Friedhelm Helfen took the rest of the proceedings into his own hands; and distributed the presents exactly as if he had found them all growing on the tree, and had not the least idea what they were nor whence they came. A doll which fell to the share

of the little Gretchen was from Sigmund, as I found from the lively demonstrations that took place. Gretchen kissed him, at which every one laughed, and made him kiss the doll, or receive a kiss from it—a waxy salute which did not seem to cause him much enthusiasm.

I could not see what the other things were, only it was evident that every one gave every one else *something*, and Frau Schmidt's face relaxed into a stern smile on one or two occasions, as the young men presented her one after the other with some offering, accompanied with speeches, and bows and ceremony. A conspicuous parcel done up in white paper was left to the last. Then Friedhelm took it up, and apparently made a long harangue, for the company—especially Karl Linders—became attentive. I saw a convulsive smile twitch Eugen's lips now and then, as the oration proceeded. Karl by-and-by grew even solemn, and it was with an almost awe-struck glance that he at last received the parcel from Friedhelm's hands, who gave it as if he were bestowing his blessing.

Great gravity, eager attention on the part of the children, who pressed up to him as he opened it; then the last wrapper was torn off, and to my utter amazement and bewilderment Karl drew forth a white woolly animal of indefinite race, on a green stand. The look which crossed his face was indescribable: the shout of laughter which greeted the discovery penetrated even to my ears.

With my face pressed against the window I watched: it was really too interesting. But my spying was put an end to. A speech appeared to be made to Frau Schmidt, to which she answered by a frosty smile and an elaborate curtsy. She was apparently saying good-night, but, with the instinct of a housekeeper, set a few chairs straight, pulled a tablecloth, and pushed a footstool to its place, and in her tour round the room, her eyes fell upon the windows. She came and put the shutters to. In one moment it had all flashed from my sight—tree and faces and lamplight and brightness.

I raised my chin from my hands, and found that I was cold, numb, and stiff. I lighted the lamp, and passed my hands over

my eyes ; but could not quite find myself, and instead of getting to some occupation of my own, I sat with Richter's "Thorough Bass and Harmony" before me ; and a pen in my hand, and wondered what they were doing *now*.

It was with the remembrance of this evening in my mind to emphasise my loneliness that I woke on Christmas morning.

At post-time my landlady brought me a letter, scented, monogrammed, with the Roman post-mark. Adelaide wrote :

" I won't wish you a merry Christmas. I think it is such nonsense. Who does have a merry Christmas now, except children and paupers ? And, all being well—or rather ill, so far as I am concerned—we shall meet before long. We are coming to Elberthal. I will tell you why when we meet. It is too long to write—and too vexatious" (this word was half-erased), "troublesome. I will let you know when we come, and our address. How are you getting on ?

"ADELAIDE."

I was much puzzled with this letter, and meditated long over it. Something lay in

the background. Adelaide was not happy. It surely could not be that Sir Peter gave her any cause for discomfort. Impossible! Did he not dote upon her? Was not the being able to "turn him round her finger" one of the principal advantages of her marriage? And yet, that she should be coming to Elberthal of her own will, was an idea which my understanding declined to accept. She must have been compelled to it—and by nothing pleasant. This threw another shadow over my spirit.

Going to the window, I saw again how lonely I was. The people were passing in groups and throngs: it was Christmas-time; they were glad. They had nothing in common with me. I looked inside my room—bare, meagre chamber that it was—the piano the only thing in it that was more than barely necessary; and a great wonder came over me.

"What is the *use* of it all? What is the use of working hard? Why am I leading this life? To earn money, and perhaps applause—sometime. Well, and when I have got it—even supposing, which is extremely

improbable, that I win it while I am young and can enjoy it—what good will it do me? I don't believe it will make me very happy. I don't know that I long for it very much. I don't know why I am working for it, except because Herr von Francius has a stronger will than I have, and rather compels me to it. Otherwise—

“Well, what should I like? What do I wish for?” At the moment I seemed to feel myself free from all prejudice and all influence, and surveying with a calm, impartial eye, possibilities and prospects, I could not discover that there was anything I particularly wished for. Had something within me changed during the last night?

I had been so eager before; I felt so apathetic now. I looked across the way. I dimly saw Courvoisier snatch up his boy, hold him in the air, and then, gathering him to him, cover him with kisses. I smiled. At the moment I felt neutral—experienced neither pleasure nor pain from the sight. I had loved the man so eagerly and intensely—with such warmth, fervour, and humility. It seemed as if now a pause had come

(only for a time, I knew, but still a pause) in the warm current of delusion, and I contemplated facts with a dry, unmoved eye. After all—what was he? A man who seemed quite content with his station—not a particularly good or noble man that I could see: with some musical talent which he turned to account to earn his bread. He had a fine figure, a handsome face, a winning smile, plenty of presence of mind, and an excellent opinion of himself.

Stay! Let me be fair—he had only asserted his right to be treated as a gentleman by one whom he had treated in every respect as a lady. He did not want me—nor to know anything about me—else why could he laugh for very glee as his boy's eyes met his? Want me? No! he was rich already. What he had was sufficient for him, and no wonder, I thought, with a jealous pang.

Who would want to have anything to do with grown-up people, with their larger selfishnesses, more developed self-seeking—robust jealousies and full-grown exactions and sophistications, when they had a beautiful little one like that? A child of one's own---

not any child, but that very child to love in that ideal way. It was a relation that one scarcely sees out of a romance: it was the most beautiful thing I ever saw.

His life was sufficient to him. He did not suffer as I had been suffering. Suppose some one were to offer him a better post than that he now had. He would be glad, and would take it without a scruple. Perhaps, for a little while some casual thought of me might now and then cross his mind—but not for long; certainly in no importunate or troublesome manner. While I—why was I there, if not for his sake? What, when I accepted the proposal of Von Francius, had been my chief thought? It had been, though all unspoken, scarcely acknowledged—yet a whispered force—"I shall not lose sight of him—of Eugen Courvoisier." I was rightly punished.

I felt no great pain just now, in thinking of this. I saw myself, and judged myself, and remembered how Faust had said once, in an immortal passage, half to himself, half to Mephisto:

"Entbehren sollst du; sollst entbehren."

And that read both ways, it comes to the same thing.

“Entbehren sollst du ; sollst entbehren.”

It flitted rhythmically through my mind on this dreamful morning, when I seemed a stranger to myself, or rather, when I seemed to stand outside myself, and contemplate, calmly and judicially, the heart which had of late beaten and throbbed with such vivid, and such unreasoning, unconnected pangs. It is as painful and as humiliating a description of self-vivisection as there is, and one not without its peculiar merits.

The end of my reflections was the same as that which is, I believe, often arrived at by the talented class called philosophers, who spend much learning and science in going into the questions about whose skirts I skimmed : many of them, like me, after summing up, say, *Cui bono* ?

So passed the morning, and the grey cloud still hung over my spirits. My landlady brought me a slice of *Kuchen* at dinner-time, for Christmas ; and wished me *guten Appetit* to it, for which I thanked her with gravity.

In the afternoon I turned to the piano. After all it was Christmas-day. After beginning a bravura singing-exercise, I suddenly stopped myself, and found myself, before I knew what I was about, singing the *Adeste Fidelis*—till I could not sing any more. Something rose in my throat—ceasing abruptly, I burst into tears, and cried plentifully over the piano keys.

“In tears, Fräulein May! *Aber*—what does that mean?”

I looked up. Von Francius stood in the doorway, looking not unkindly at me, with a bouquet in his hand of Christmas roses and ferns.

“It is only because it is Christmas,” said I.

“Are you quite alone?”

“Yes.”

“So am I.”

“You! But you have so many friends.”

“Have I? It is true, that if friends count by the number of invitations that one has, I have many. Unfortunately I could not make up my mind to accept any. As I passed through the flower-market this morning I

thought of you—naturally. It struck me that perhaps you had no one to come and wish you the Merry Christmas and Happy New Year which belongs to you of right, so *I* came, and have the pleasure to wish it you now, with these flowers, though truly they are not *Maiblümchen*.”

He raised my hand to his lips, and I was quite amazed at the sense of strength, healthiness, and new life which his presence brought.

“I am very foolish,” I remarked; “I ought to know better. But I am unhappy about my sister, and also I have been foolishly thinking of old times, when she and I were at home together.”

“*Ei!* That is foolish. Those things—old times and all that—are the very deuce for making one miserable. Strauss—he who writes dance music—has made a waltz, and called it ‘The Good Old Times.’ *Lieber Himmel!* Fancy *waltzing* to the memory of old times! A requiem or a funeral march would have been intelligible.”

“Yes.”

“Well, you must not sit here and let these

old times say what they like to you. Will you come out with me?"

"Go out!" I echoed, with an unwilling shrinking from it. My soul preferred rather to shut herself up in her case and turn surlily away from the light outside. But, as usual, he had his way.

"Yes—out. The two loneliest people in Elberthal will make a little *Zauberfest* for themselves. I will show you some pictures. There are some new ones at the Exhibition. Make haste."

So calm, so matter-of-fact was his manner, so indisputable did he seem to think his proposition, that I half rose; then I sat down again.

"I don't want to go out, Herr von Francius."

"That is foolish. Quick! before the daylight fades, and it grows too dark for the pictures."

Scarcely knowing why I complied, I went to my room and put on my things. What a shabby sight I looked! I felt it keenly; so much, that when I came back and found him seated at the piano, and playing a wonderful

in and out fugue of immense learning and immense difficulty, and quite without pathos or tenderness, I interrupted him incontinently.

“Here I am, Herr von Francius. You have asked the most shabbily-dressed person in Elberthal to be your companion. I have a mind to make you hold to your bargain, whether you like it or not.”

Von Francius turned, surveying me from head to foot, with a smile. All the pedagogue was put off. It was holiday-time. I was half vexed at myself for beginning to feel as if it were holiday-time with me too.

We went out together. The wind was raw and cold, the day dreary, the streets not so full as they had been. We went along the street past the *Tonhalle*, and there we met Courvoisier alone. He looked at us, but though Von Francius raised his hat, he did not notice us. There was a pallid change upon his face, a fixed look in his eyes, a strange, drawn, subdued expression upon his whole countenance. My heart leaped with an answering pang. That mood of the morning

had fled. I had "found myself again," but again not "happily."

I followed Von Francius up the stairs of the picture exhibition. No one was in the room. All the world had other occupations on Christmas'afternoon, or preferred the stove-side and the family circle.

Von Francius showed me a picture which he said every one was talking about.

"Why?" I inquired when I had contemplated it, and failed to find it lovely.

"The drawing, the grouping, are admirable, as you must see. The art displayed is wonderful. I find the picture excellent."

"But the subject?" said I.

It was not a large picture, and represented the interior of an artist's atelier. In the foreground a dissipated-looking young man tilted his chair backwards as he held his gloves in one hand, and with the other stroked his moustache, while he contemplated a picture standing on an easel before him. The face was hard, worn, *blasé*; the features, originally good, and even beautiful, had had all the latent loveliness worn out of them by a wrong, unbeautiful life. He wore

a tall hat, very much to one side, as if to accent the fact that the rest of the company, upon whom he had turned his back, certainly did not merit that he should be at the trouble of baring his head to them. And the rest of the company—a girl, a model, seated on a chair upon a raised dais, dressed in a long, flounced white skirt, not of the freshest, some kind of oriental wrap falling negligently about it—arms, models of shapeliness, folded, and she crouching herself together as if wearied, or contemptuous, or perhaps a little chilly. Upon a divan near her a man—presumably the artist to whom the establishment pertained—stretched at full length, looking up carelessly into her face, a pipe in his mouth, with indifference and—scarcely impertinence—it did not take the trouble to be a fully-developed impertinence—in every gesture. This was the picture; faithful to life, significant in its very insignificance, before which Von Francius sat, and declared that the drawing, colouring, and grouping were perfect.*

“The subject?” he echoed after a pause.
“It is only a scrap of artist-life.”

* The original is by Charles Herman, of Brussels.

“Is *that* artist-life?” said I, shrugging my shoulders. “I do not like it at all; it is common, low, vulgar. There is no romance about it; it only reminds one of stale tobacco and flat champagne.”

“You are too particular,” said Von Francius after a pause, and with a flavour of some feeling which I did not quite understand tincturing his voice.

For my part, I was looking at the picture and thinking of what Courvoisier had said: “Beauty, impudence, assurance, and an admiring public.” That girl was beautiful—at least, she had the battered remains of a decided beauty; she had impudence certainly, and assurance too, *and* an admiring public, I supposed, which testified its admiration by lolling on a couch and staring at her, or keeping its hat on and turning its back to her.

“Do you really admire the picture, Herr von Francius?” I inquired.

“Indeed I do. It is so admirably true. That is the kind of life into which I was born, and in which I was for a long time brought up; but I escaped from it.”

I looked at him in astonishment. It seemed so extraordinary that that model of reticence should speak to me, above all, upon himself. It struck me for the very first time that no one ever spoke of Von Francius as if he had any one belonging to him. Calm, cold, lonely, self-sufficing—and self-sufficing, too, because he must be so, because he had none other to whom to turn—that was his character, and viewing him in that manner I had always judged him. But what might the truth be ?

“Were you not happy when you were young ?” I asked, on a quick impulse.

“Happy ! Who expects to be happy ? If I had been simply not miserable, I should have counted my childhood a good one ; but——”

He paused a moment, then went on :

“Your great novelist, Dickens, had a poor, sordid kind of childhood, in outward circumstances. But mine was spiritually sordid—hideous, repulsive. There are some plants which spring from and flourish in mud and slime ; they are but a flabby, pestiferous growth, as you may suppose. I was, to

begin with, a human specimen of that kind ; I was in an atmosphere of moral mud, an intellectual hot-bed. I don't know what there was in me that set me against the life ; that I never can tell. It was a sort of hell on earth that I was living in. One day something happened—I was twelve years old then—something happened, and it seemed as if all my nature—its good and its evil, its energies and indolences, its pride and humility—all ran together, welded by the furnace of passion into one furious, white-hot rage of anger, rebellion. In an instant I had decided my course ; in an hour I had acted upon it. I am an odd kind of fellow, I believe. I quitted that scene, and have never visited it since. I cannot describe to you the anger I then felt, and to which I yielded. Twelve years old I was then. I fought hard for many years ; but, *mein Fräulein*—” (he looked at me, and paused a moment)—“that was the first occasion upon which I ever was really angry ; it has been the last. I have never felt the sensation of anger since—I mean personal anger. Artistic anger I have known ; the anger at bad work, at false in-

terpretations, at charlatanry in art ; but I have never been angry with the anger that resents. I tell you this as a curiosity of character. With that brief flash, all resentment seemed to evaporate from me—to exhaust itself in one brief, resolute, effective attempt at self-cleansing, self-government.”

He paused.

“Tell me more, Herr von Francius ?” I besought. “Do not leave off there. Afterwards ?”

“You really care to hear ? Afterwards I lived through hardships in plenty ; but I had effectually severed the whole connection with that which dragged me down. I used all my will to rise. I am not boasting, but simply stating a peculiarity of my temperament when I tell you that what I determine upon I always accomplish. I determined upon rising, and I have risen to what I am. I set it, or something like it, before me as my goal, and I have attained it.”

“Well ?” I asked, with some eagerness ; for I, after all my unfulfilled strivings, had asked myself *Cui bono ?* “And what is the end of it ? Are you satisfied ?”

“How quickly and how easily you see!” said he with a smile. “I value the position I have, in a certain way—that is, I see the advantage it gives me, and the influence. But that deep inner happiness, which lies outside of condition and circumstances—that feeling of the poet in *Faust*—don’t you remember?—

“‘I nothing had, and yet enough’—

all that is unknown to me. For I ask myself, *Cui bono?*”

“Like me,” I could not help saying.

He added :

“Fräulein May, the nearest feeling I have had to happiness has been the knowing you. Do you know that you are a person who makes joy?”

“No, indeed I did not.”

“It is true, though. I should like, if you do not mind—if you can say it truly—to hear from your lips that you look upon me as your friend.”

“Indeed, Herr von Francius, I feel you my very best friend, and I would not lose

your regard for anything," I was able to assure him.

And then, as it was growing dark, the woman from the receipt of custom by the door came in and told us that she must close the rooms.

We got up and went out. In the street the lamps were lighted, and the people going up and down.

Von Francius left me at the door of my lodgings.

"Good-evening, *liebes Fräulein*; and thank you for your company this afternoon."

A light burnt steadily all evening in the sitting-room of my opposite neighbours; but the shutters were closed. I only saw a thin stream coming through a chink.



CHAPTER IV.

“Es ist bestimmt, in Gottes Rath,
Dass man vom Liebsten was man hat
Muss scheiden.”

OUR merry little *Zauberfest* of Christmas eve was over. Christmas morning came. I remember that morning well—a grey, neutral kind of day, whose monotony outside emphasised the keenness of emotion within.

On that morning the postman came—a rather rare occurrence with us ; for, except with notes from pupils, notices of *Proben*, or other official communications, he seldom troubled us.

It was Sigmund who opened the door ; it was he who took the letter, and wished the

postman "good-morning" in his courteous little way. I dare say that the incident gave an additional pang afterwards to the father, if he marked it, and seldom did the smallest act or movement of his child escape him.

"Father, here is a letter," he said, giving it into Eugen's hand.

"Perhaps it is for Friedel; thou art too ready to think that everything appertains to thy father," said Eugen with a smile, as he took the letter and looked at it; but before he had finished speaking the smile had faded. There remained a whiteness, a blank, a haggardness.

I had caught a glimpse of the letter; it was large, square, massive, and there was a seal upon the envelope—a regular letter of fate out of a romance.

Eugen took it into his hand, and for once he made no answer to the caress of his child, who put his arms round his neck and wanted to climb upon his knee. He allowed the action, but passively.

"Let me open it!" cried Sigmund. "Let me open thy letter!"

“No, no, child!” said Eugen in a sharp, pained tone. “Let it alone.”

Sigmund looked surprised, and recoiled a little; a shock clouding his eyes. It was all right if his father said no, but a shade presently crossed his young face. His father did not usually speak so: did not usually have that white and pallid look about the eyes—above all, did not look at his son with a look that meant nothing.

Eugen was usually prompt enough in all he did, but he laid aside that letter, and proposed in a subdued tone that we should have breakfast. Which we had, and still the letter lay unopened. And when breakfast was over he even took up his violin and played runs and shakes and scales—and the air of a drinking song, which sounded grotesque in contrast with the surroundings. This lasted for some time, and yet the letter was not opened. It seemed as if he could not open it. I knew that it was with a desperate effort that he at last took it up, and — went into his room and shut the door.

I was reading—that is, I had a book in

my hands, and was stretched out in the full luxury of an unexpected holiday upon the couch ; but I could no more have read under the new influence, could no more have helped watching Sigmund, than I could help breathing and feeling.

He, Sigmund, stood still for a moment, looking at the closed door ; gazing at it as if he expected it to open, and a loved hand to beckon him within. But it remained pitilessly shut, and the little boy had to accommodate himself as well as he could to a new phase in his mental history—the being excluded — left out in the cold. After making an impulsive step towards the door he turned ; plunged his hands into his pockets as if to keep them from attacking the handle of that closed door, and walking to the window, gazed out, silent and motionless. I watched : I was compelled to watch. He was listening with every faculty, every fibre, for the least noise, the faintest movement from the room from which he was shut out. I did not dare to speak to him. I was very miserable myself ; and a sense of coming loss and disaster was driven firmly into my

mind and fixed there—a heavy prevision of inevitable sorrow and pain overhung my mind. I turned to my book and tried to read. It was one of the most delightful of romances that I held—no other than *Die Kinder der Welt*—and the scene was that in which Edwin and Toinette make that delightful, irregular Sunday excursion to the Charlottenburg, but I understood none of it. With that pathetic little real figure taking up so much of my consciousness, and every moment more insistently so, I could think of nothing else.

Dead silence from the room within; utter and entire silence, which lasted so long that my misery grew acute, and still that little figure, which was now growing terrible to me, neither spoke nor stirred. I do not know how long by the clock we remained in these relative positions: by my feelings it was a week; by those of Sigmund, I doubt not, a hundred years. But he turned at last, and with a face from which all trace of colour had fled walked slowly towards the closed door.

“Sigmund!” I cried in a loud whisper.

“Come here, my child! Stay here, with me.”

“I must go in,” said he. He did not knock. He opened the door softly, and went in, closing it after him. I know not what passed. There was silence as deep as before, after one short, inarticulate murmur. There are some moments in this our life which are at once sacrificial, sacramental, and strong with the virtue of absolution for sins past; moments which are a crucible from which a stained soul may come out white again. Such were these—I know it now—in which father and son were alone together.

After a short silence, during which my book hung unheeded from my hand, I left the house, out of a sort of respect for my two friends. I had nothing particular to do, and so strolled aimlessly about, first into the *Hofgarten*, where I watched the Rhine, and looked Hollandwards along its low, flat shores, to where there was a bend, and beyond the bend, Kaiserswerth. It is now long since I saw *the* river. Fair are his banks higher up—not at Elberthal would he have struck the stranger as being a stream

for which to fight and die ; but to me there is no part of his banks so lovely as the poor old *Schöne Aussicht* in the Elberthal *Hofgarten*, from whence I have watched the sun set flaming over the broad water, and felt my heart beat to the sense of precious possessions in the homely town behind. Then I strolled through the town, and coming down the *Königsallée*, beheld some bustle in front of a large, imposing-looking house, which had long been shut up and uninhabited. It had been a venture by a too shortly successful banker. He had built the house, lived in it three months, and finding himself bankrupt, had one morning disposed of himself by cutting his throat. Since then the house had been closed, and had had an ill-name, though it was the handsomest building in the most fashionable part of the town, with a grand *porte-cochère* in front, and a pleasant, enticing kind of bowery garden behind—the house faced the *Exerzierplatz*, and was on the promenade of Elberthal. A fine chestnut avenue made the street into a pleasant wood, and yet *Königsallée* No. 3 always looked deserted and depressing. I paused to watch

the workmen who were throwing open the shutters and uncovering the furniture. There were some women-servants busy with brush and duster in the hall, and a splendid barouche was being pushed through the *porte-cochère* into the back premises: a couple of trim-looking English grooms with four horses followed.

“Is some one coming to live here?” I demanded of a workman, who made answer:

“*Ja wohl!* A rich English milord has taken the house furnished for six months—Sir Le Marchant, *oder so etwas*. I do not know the name quite correctly. He comes in a few days.”

“So!” said I, wondering what attraction Elberthal could offer to a rich English sir or milord, and feeling at the same time a mild glow of curiosity as to him and his circumstances, for I humbly confess it—I had never seen an authentic milord. Elberthal and Köln were almost the extent of my travels, and I only remembered that at the *Niederrheinisches Musikfest* last year, some one had pointed out to me a decrepit-looking old gentleman, with a bottle-nose and a

meaningless eye, as a milord—very, very rich, and exceedingly good. I had sorrowed a little at the time in thinking that he did not personally better grace his circumstances and character, but until this moment I had never thought of him again.

“That is his secretary,” pursued the workman to me, in an undertone, as he pointed out a young man who was standing in the middle of the hall, note-book in hand. “Herr Arkwright. He is looking after us.”

“When does the *Engländer* come?”

“In a few days, with his servants and milady, and milady’s maid and dogs and bags and everything. And she—milady—is to have *those* rooms”—he pointed overhead, and grinned—“those, where Banquier Klein was found with his throat cut. *Hè!*”

He laughed, and began to sing lustily, “*In Berlin, sagt’ er.*”

After giving one more short survey to the house, and wondering why the apartments of a suicide should be assigned to a young and beautiful woman (for I instinctively judged her to be young and beautiful), I went on my way, and my thoughts soon returned to

Eugen and Sigmund, and that trouble which I felt was hanging inevitably over us.

* * * *

Eugen was, that evening, in a mood of utter, cool aloofness. His trouble did not appear to be one that he could confide—at present, at least. He took up his violin and discoursed most eloquent music, in the dark, to which music Sigmund and I listened. Sigmund sat upon my knee, and Eugen went on playing—improvising, or rather speaking the thoughts which were uppermost in his heart. It was wild, strange, melancholy, sometimes sweet, but ever with a ringing note of woe so piercing as to stab, recurring perpetually—such a note as comes throbbing to life now and then in the *Sonate Pathétique*, or in Raff's Fifth Symphony.

Eugen always went to Sigmund after he had gone to bed, and talked to him or listened to him. I do not know if he taught him something like a prayer at such times, or spoke to him of supernatural things, or upon what they discoursed. I only know that it was an interchange of soul, and that usually

he came away from it looking glad. But to-night, after remaining longer than usual, he returned with a face more haggard than I had seen it yet.

He sat down opposite me at the table, and there was silence, with an ever-deepening, sympathetic pain on my part. At last I raised my eyes to his face ; one elbow rested upon the table, and his head leaned upon his hand. The lamplight fell full upon his face, and there was that in it which would let me be silent no longer, any more than one could see a comrade bleeding to death, and not try to stanch the wound. I stepped up to him and laid my hand upon his shoulder. He looked up drearily, unrecognisingly, unsmilingly at me.

“Eugen, what hast thou?”

“*La mort dans l'âme,*” he answered, quoting from a poem which we had both been reading.

“And what has caused it?”

“Must you know, friend?” he asked. “If I did not need to tell it, I should be very glad.”

“I must know it, or—or leave you to it!”

said I, choking back some emotion. "I cannot pass another day like this."

"And I had no right to let you spend such a day as this," he answered. "Forgive me once again, Friedel—you who have forgiven so much and so often."

"Well," said I, "let us have the worst, Eugen. It is something about——"

I glanced towards the door, on the other side of which Sigmund was sleeping.

His face became set, as if of stone. One word, and one alone, after a short pause, passed his lips—"Ja!"

I breathed again. It was so then.

"I told you, Friedel, that I should have to leave him?"

The words dropped out one by one from his lips, distinct, short, steady.

"Yes."

"That was bad, very bad. The worst, I thought, that could befall; but it seems that my imagination was limited."

"Eugen, *what is it?*"

"I shall not have to leave him. I shall have to send him away from me."

As if with the utterance of the words, the

very core and fibre of resolution melted away and vanished, and the broken spirit turned writhing and shuddering from the phantom that extended its arms for the sacrifice, he flung his arms upon the table ; his shoulders heaved. I heard two suppressed, choked-down sobs—the sobs of a strong man—strong alike in body and mind ; strongest of all in the heart and spirit and purpose to love and cherish.

“ *La mort dans l’âme*,” indeed ! He could have chosen no fitter expression.

“ Send him away !” I echoed, beneath my breath.

“ Send my child away from me—as if I—did not—want him,” said Courvoisier slowly, and in a voice made low and halting with anguish, as he lifted his gaze, dim with the desperate pain of coming parting, and looked me in the face.

I had begun in an aimless manner to pace the room ; my heart on fire, my brain reaching wildly after some escape from the fetters of circumstance, invisible but iron-strong, relentless as cramps and glaives of tempered steel. I knew no *reason*, of course. I knew

no outward circumstances of my friend's life or destiny. I did not wish to learn any. I did know that since he said it was so it must be so. Sigmund must be sent away! He—we—must be left alone; two poor men, with the brightness gone from our lives.

The scene does not let me rightly describe it. It was an anguish allied in its intensity to that of Gethsemane. Let me relate it as briefly as I can.

I made no spoken assurance of my sympathy. I winced almost at the idea of speaking to him. I knew then that we may contemplate, or believe we contemplate, some coming catastrophe for years, believing that so the suffering, when it finally falls, will be lessened. This is a delusion. Let the blow rather come short, sharp, and without forewarning: preparation heightens the agony.

"Friedel," said he at last, "you do not ask why must this be."

"I do not need to ask why. I know that it must be, or you would not do it."

"I would tell you if I could—if I might."

"For heaven's sake, don't suppose that I

wish to pry——” I began. He interrupted me.

“You will make me laugh in spite of myself,” said he. “*You* wish to pry! Now, let me see how much more I can tell you. You perhaps think it wrong, in an abstract light, for a father to send his young son away from him. That is because you do not know what I do. If you did, you would say, as I do, that it must be so—— I never saw it till now. That letter was a revelation. It is now all as clear as sunshine.”

I assented.

“Then you consent to take my word that it must be so, without more.”

“Indeed, Eugen, I wish for no more.”

He looked at me. “If I were to tell you,” said he suddenly, and an impulsive light beamed in his eyes. A look of *relief*—it was nothing else—of hope, crossed his face. Then he sank again into his former attitude—as if tired and wearied with some hard battle: exhausted, or what we more expressively call *niedergeschlagen*.

“Now something more,” he went on; and I saw the frown of desperation that gathered

upon his brow. He went on quickly, as if otherwise he could not say what had to be said; "When he goes from me, he goes to learn to become a stranger to me. I promise not to see him, nor write to him, nor in any way communicate with him, or influence him. We part—utterly and entirely."

"Eugen! Impossible! *Herrgott!* Impossible!" cried I, coming to a stop, and looking incredulously at him. That I did not believe. "Impossible!" I repeated beneath my breath.

"By faith men can move mountains," he retorted.

This, then, was the flavouring which made the cup so intolerable.

"You say that that is, and must be wrong under all circumstances," said Eugen, eyeing me steadily.

I paused. I could almost have found it in my heart to say "Yes, I do." But my faith in, and love for this man had grown with me: as a daily prayer grows part of one's thoughts, so was my confidence in him part of my mind. He looked as if he were appealing to me to say that it must be wrong,

and so give him some excuse to push it aside. But I could not. After wavering for a moment, I answered :

“No. I am sure you have sufficient reasons.”

“I have. God knows I have.”

In the silence that ensued, my mind was busy. Eugen Courvoisier was not a religious man, as the popular meaning of religious runs. He did not say of his misfortune, “It is God’s will,” nor did he add, “and therefore sweet to me.” He said nothing of whose will it was ; but I felt that had that cause been a living thing—had it been a man, for instance, he would have gripped it and fastened to it until it lay dead and impotent, and he could set his heel upon it.

But it was no strong, living, tangible thing. It was a breathless abstraction—a something existing in the minds of men, and which they call “Right !” and being that—not an outside law which an officer of the law could enforce upon him : being that abstraction, he obeyed it.

As for saying that because it was right he

liked it, or felt any consolation from the knowledge—he never once pretended to any such thing; but, true to his character of Child of the World, hated it with a hatred as strong as his love to the creature which it deprived him of. Only—he did it. He is not alone in such circumstances. Others have obeyed and will again obey this invisible law in circumstances as anguishing as those in which he stood: will steel their hearts to hardness while every fibre cries out, “Relent!” or will like him writhe under the lash, shake their chained hands at heaven, and—submit.

“One more question, Eugen. *When?*”

“Soon.”

“A year would seem soon to any of us three.”

“In a very short time. It may be in weeks: it may be in days. Now, Friedhelm, have a little pity and don’t probe any further.”

But I had no need to ask any more questions. The dreary evening passed somehow over—and bedtime came, and the morrow dawned.

For us three it brought the knowledge that for an indefinite time retrospective happiness must play the part of sun on our mental horizon.



CHAPTER V.

“My Lady’s Glory.”

“**K**ÖNIGSALLÉE, No. 3,” wrote Adelaide to me, “is the house which has been taken for us. We shall be there on Tuesday evening.”

I accepted this communication in my own sense, and did not go to meet Adelaide, nor visit her that evening, but wrote a card, saying I would come on the following morning. I had seen the house which had been taken for Sir Peter and Lady Le Marchant—a large, gloomy-looking house, with a tragedy attached to it, which had stood empty ever since I had come to Elberthal.

Up the fashionable Königsallée, under the naked chestnut avenue, and past the great

long Caserne and *Exerzierplatz*—a way on which I did not as a rule intrude my ancient and poverty-stricken garments, I went, on the morning after Adelaide's arrival. Lady Le Marchant had not yet left her room, but if I were Miss Wedderburn I was to be taken to her immediately. Then I was taken upstairs, and had time to remark upon the contrast between my sister's surroundings and my own, before I was delivered over to a lady's-maid—French in nationality—who opened a door and announced me as *Mademoiselle Veddairebairne*.

I had a rapid, dim impression that it was quite the chamber of a *grande dame*, in the midst of which stood my lady herself, having slowly risen as I came in.

"At last you have condescended to come," said the old proud curt voice.

"How are you, Adelaide?" said I originally, feeling that any display of emotion would be unwelcome and inappropriate, and moreover, feeling any desire to indulge in the same suddenly evaporate.

She took my hand loosely, gave me a little chilly kiss on the cheek, and then

held me off at arms length to look at me.

I did not speak. I could think of nothing agreeable to say. The only words that rose to my lips were, "How very ill you look!" and I wisely concluded *not* to say them. She was very beautiful, and looked prouder and more imperious than ever. But she was changed. I could not tell what it was. I could find no name for the subtle alteration: ere long I knew only too well what it was. Then, I only knew that she was different from what she had been, and different in a way that aroused tenfold all my vague forebodings.

She was wasted too—had gone, for her, quite thin; and the repressed restlessness of her eyes made a disagreeable impression upon me. Was she perhaps wasted with passion and wicked thoughts? She looked as if it would not have taken much to bring the smouldering fire into a blaze of full fury—as if fire and not blood ran in her veins.

She was in a loose silk dressing-gown, which fell in long folds about her stately

figure. Her thick black hair was twisted into a knot about her head. She was surrounded on all sides with rich and costly things. All the old severe simplicity of style had vanished—it seemed as if she had gratified every passing fantastic wish or whim of her restless, reckless spirit, and the result was a curious medley of the ugly, grotesque, ludicrous and beautiful—a feverish dream of Cleopatra-like luxury, in the midst of which she stood, as beautiful and sinuous as a serpent, and looking as if she could be, upon occasion, as poisonous as the same.

She looked me over from head to foot with piercing eyes, and then said, half-scornfully, half-enviously :

“How well a stagnant life seems to suit some people ! Now you—you are immensely improved—unspeakably improved. You have grown into a pretty woman—more than a pretty woman. I shouldn’t have thought a few months *could* make such an alteration in any one.”

Her words struck me as a kind of satire upon herself.

“I might say the same to you,” said I

constrainedly. "I think you are very much altered."

Indeed I felt strangely ill at ease with the beautiful creature who, I kept trying to convince myself, was my sister Adelaide, but who seemed farther apart from me than ever. But the old sense of fascination which she had been wont to exercise over me returned again in all or in more than its primitive strength.

"I want to talk to you," said she, forcing me into a deep easy-chair. "I have millions of things to ask you. Take off your hat and mantle. You must stay all day. Heavens ! how shabby you are ! I never saw anything so worn out—and yet your dress suits you, and you look nice in it." (She sighed deeply.) "Nothing suits me now. Formerly I looked well in everything. I should have looked well in rags, and people would have turned to look after me. Now, whatever I put on makes me look hideous."

"Nonsense !"

"It does —— And I am glad of it," she added, closing her lips as if she closed in some bitter joy.

“I wish you would tell me why you have come here,” I inquired innocently. “I was so astonished. It was the last place I should have thought of your coming to.”

“Naturally. But you see Sir Peter adores me so that he hastens to gratify my smallest wish. I expressed a desire one day to see you, and two days afterwards we were *en route*. He said I should have my wish. Sisterly love was a beautiful thing, and he felt it his duty to encourage it.”

I looked at her, and could not decide whether she were in jest or earnest. If she were in jest, it was but a sorry kind of joke—if in earnest, she chose a disagreeably flip-pant manner of expressing herself.

“Sir Peter has great faith in annoying and thwarting me,” she went on. “He has been looking better and more cheerful ever since we left Rome.”

“But Adelaide —— if you wished to leave Rome ——”

“But I did not wish to leave Rome. I wished to stay—so we came away, you know.”

The suppressed rage and hatred in her

tone made me feel uncomfortable. I avoided speaking, but I could not altogether avoid looking at her. Our eyes met, and Adelaide burst into a peal of harsh laughter.

“Oh, your face, May! It is a study. I had a particular objection to coming to Elberthal, *therefore* Sir Peter instantly experienced a particular desire to come. When you are married you will understand these things. I was almost enjoying myself in Rome: I suppose Sir Peter was afraid that familiarity might bring dislike, or that if we stayed too long I might feel it dull. This is a gay, lively place, I believe—we came here, and for aught I know we are going to stay here.”

She laughed again, and I sat aghast. I had been miserable about Adelaide's marriage, but I had very greatly trusted in what she had prognosticated about being able to do what she liked with him. I began now to think that there must have been some miscalculation—that she had mistaken the metal and found it not quite so ductile as she had expected. I knew enough of her to be aware that I was probably the first

person to whom she had spoken in such a manner, and that not even to me would she have so spoken unless some strong feeling had prompted her to it. This made me still more uneasy. She held so fast by the fine polish of the outside of the cup and platter. Very likely the world in general supposed that she and Sir Peter were a model couple.

“I am glad you are here,” she pursued. “It is a relief to have some one else than Arkwright to speak to.”

“Who is Arkwright?”

“Sir Peter’s secretary—a very good sort of boy. He knows all about our domestic bliss and other concerns—because he can’t help. Sir Peter tells him——”

A hand on the door-handle outside. A pause ere the persons came in, for Sir Peter’s voice was audible, giving directions to some one; probably the secretary of whom Adelaide had spoken. She started violently: the colour fled from her face; pale dismay painted itself for a moment upon her lips, but only for a moment. In the next she was outwardly herself again. But the hand trembled

which passed her handkerchief over her lips.

The door was fully opened, and Sir Peter came in.

Yes ; that was the same face, the same penthouse of ragged eyebrow over the cold and snaky eye beneath, the same wolfish mouth and permanent hungry smile. But he looked better, stouter, stronger ; more cheerful. It seemed as if my lady's society had done him a world of good, and acted as a kind of elixir of life.

I observed Adelaide. As he came in her eyes dropped : her hand closed tightly over the handkerchief she held, crushing it together in her grasp ; she held her breath ; then, recovered, she faced him.

"Heyday ! Whom have we here ?" he asked, in a voice which time and a residence in hearing of the language of music had not mollified. "Whom have we here ? Your dressmaker, my lady ? Have you had to send for a dressmaker already ? Ha ! what ? Your sister ? Impossible ! Miss May, I am delighted to see you again ! Are you very well ? You look a little—a—shabby, one

might almost say, my dear—a little seedy, hey?”

I had no answer ready for this winning greeting.

“Rather like my lady before she *was* my lady,” he continued pleasantly, as his eyes roved over the room, over its furniture, over us.

There was power—a horrible kind of strength and vitality in that figure—a crushing impression of his potency to make one miserable, conveyed in the strong, rasping voice. Quite a different Sir Peter from my erstwhile wooer. He was a masculine, strong, planning creature, whose force of will was able to crush that of my sister as easily as her forefinger might crush a troublesome midge. He was not blind or drivelling: he could reason, plot, argue, concoct a systematic plan for revenge, and work it out fully and in detail; he was able at once to grasp the broadest bearing and the minute details of a position, and to act upon their intimations with crushing accuracy. He was calm, decided, keen, and all in a certain small, bounded, positive way which made him all

the more efficient as a ruling factor in this social sphere ; where small, bounded, positive strength, without keen sympathies save in the one direction—self—and without idea of generosity, save with regard to its own merits, pays better than a higher kind of strength—better than the strength of Joan of Arc, or Saint Stephen, or Christ.

This was the real Sir Peter, and before the revelation I stood aghast. And that look in Adelaide's eyes, that tone in her voice, that restrained spring in her movements, would have been rebellion, revolution, but in the act of breaking forth it became—fear. She had been outwitted—most thoroughly and completely. She had got a jailer and a prison. She feared the former, and every tradition of her life bade her remain in the latter.

Sir Peter, pleasantly exhilarated by my confusion and my lady's sullen silence, proceeded with an agreeable smile :

“Are you *never* coming downstairs, madam? I have been deprived long enough of the delights of your society. Come down ! I want you to read to me.”

“I am engaged, as you may see,” she

answered in a low voice of opposition.

“Then the engagement must be deferred. There is a great deal of reading to do. There is the *Times* for a week.”

“I hate the *Times*, and I don’t understand it.”

“So much the more reason why you should learn to do so. In half an hour,” said Sir Peter, consulting his watch, “I shall be ready, or say in quarter of an hour.”

“Absurd! I cannot be ready in quarter of an hour. Where is Mr. Arkwright?”

“What is Mr. Arkwright to you, my dear? You may be sure that Mr. Arkwright’s time is not being wasted. If his mamma knew what he were doing she would be *quite* satisfied — oh, quite. In quarter of an hour.”

He was leaving the room, but paused at the door, with a suspicious look.

“Miss May, it is a pity for you to go away. It will do you good to see your sister, I am sure. Pray spend the day with us. Now, my lady, waste no more time.”

With that he finally departed. Adelaide's face was white, but she did not address me. She rang for her maid.

"Dress my hair, Toinette, and do it as quickly as possible. Is my dress ready?" was all she said.

"*Mais oui, madame.*"

"Quick!" she repeated. "You have only quarter of an hour."

Despite the suppressed cries, expostulations, and announcements that it was impossible, Adelaide was dressed in quarter of an hour.

"You will stay, May?" said she; and I knew it was only the presence of Toinette which restrained her from urgently imploring me to stay.

I remained, though not all day: only until it was time to go and have my lesson from Von Francius. During my stay, however, I had ample opportunity to observe how things were.

Sir Peter appeared to have lit upon a congenial occupation somewhat late in life, or perhaps previous practice had made him an adept in it. His time was fully occupied in

carrying out a series of experiments upon his wife's pride, with a view to humble and bring it to the ground. If he did not fully succeed in that, he succeeded in making her hate him as scarcely ever was man hated before.

They had now been married some two or three months, and had foresworn all semblance of a pretence at unity or concord. She thwarted him as much as she could, and defied him as far as she dared. He played round and round his victim, springing upon her at last, with some look, or word, or hint, or smile, which meant something—I know not what—that cowed her.

Oh, it was a pleasant household!—a cheerful, amiable scene of connubial love, in which this fair woman of two and twenty found herself, with every prospect of its continuing for an indefinite number of years; for the Le Marchants were a long-lived family, and Sir Peter ailed nothing.



CHAPTER VI.

“Wenn Menschen aus einander gehen
So sagen sie, Auf Wiedersehen !
Auf Wiedersehen !”

EUGEN had said, “Very soon—it may be weeks, it may be days,” and had begged me not to inquire further into the matter. Seeing his anguish, I had refrained ; but when two or three days had passed, and nothing was done or said, I began to hope that the parting might *not* be deferred even a few weeks ; for I believe the father suffered, and with him the child, enough each *day* to wipe out years of transgression.

It was impossible to hide from Sigmund that some great grief threatened, or had already descended upon his father, and there-

fore upon him. The child's sympathy with the man's nature, with every mood and feeling—I had almost said his intuitive understanding of his father's very thoughts, was too keen and intense to be hoodwinked or turned aside. He did not behave like other children—of course—*versteht sich*, as Eugen said to me, with a dreary smile. He did not hang about his father's neck, imploring to hear what was the matter ; he did not weep or wail, or make complaints. After that first moment of uncontrollable pain and anxiety, when he had gone into the room whose door was closed upon him, and in which Eugen had not told him all that was coming, he displayed no violent emotion ; but he did what was to Eugen and me much more heart-breaking—brooded silently ; grew every day wanner and thinner, and spent long intervals in watching his father, with eyes which nothing could divert, and nothing deceive. If Eugen tried to be cheerful, to put on a little gaiety of demeanour which he did not feel in his heart, Sigmund made no answer to it, but continued to look with the same solemn, large, and mournful gaze.

His father's grief was eating into his own young heart. He asked not what it was ; but both Eugen and I knew that in time, if it went on long enough, he would die of it. The picture, "Innocence Dying of a Blood-stain," which Hawthorne has suggested to us, may have its prototypes and counterparts in unsuspected places. Here was one. Nor did Sigmund, as some others, children both of larger and smaller growth, might have done, turn to me, and ask me to tell him the meaning of the sad change which had crept silently and darkly into our lives. He outspartaned the Spartan in many ways. His father had not chosen to tell him ; he would die rather than ask the meaning of the silence.

One night—when some three days had passed since the letter had come—as Eugen and I sat alone, it struck me that I heard a weary turning over in the little bed in the next room, and a stifled sob coming distinctly to my ears. I lifted my head. Eugen had heard too ; he was looking, with an expression of pain and indecision, towards the door.

With a vast effort—the greatest my regard for him had yet made—I took it upon myself, laid my hand on his arm, and coercing him again into the chair, from which he had half risen, whispered :

“ I will tell him. You cannot. *Nicht wahr?* ”

A look was the only, but a very sufficient answer.

I went into the inner room and closed the door. A dim whiteness of moonlight struggled through the shutters, and very, very faintly showed me the outline of the child—who was dear to me. Stooping down beside him, I asked if he were awake.

“ *Ja, ich wache,* ” he replied in a patient, resigned kind of small voice.

“ Why dost thou not sleep, Sigmund ? Art thou not well ? ”

“ No, I am not well, ” he answered ; but with an expression of double meaning. “ *Mir ist's nicht wohl.* ”

“ What ails thee ? ”

“ If you know what ails *him*, you know what ails me. ”

“ Do you not know yourself ? ” I asked.

“No,” said Sigmund, with a short sob.
“He says he cannot tell me.”

I slipped upon my knees beside the little bed, and paused a moment. I am not ashamed to say that I prayed to something which in my mind existed outside all earthly things—perhaps to the *Freude* which Schiller sang and Beethoven composed to—for help in the hardest task of my life.

“Cannot tell me.” No wonder he could not tell that soft-eyed, clinging warmth ; that subtle mixture of fire and softness, spirit and gentleness—that spirit which in the years of trouble they had passed together had grown part of his very nature—that they must part ! No wonder that the father, upon whom the child built his every idea of what was great and good, beautiful, right and true in every shape and form, could not say, “You shall not stay with me ; you shall be thrust forth to strangers ; and, moreover, I will not see you nor speak to you, nor shall you hear my name ; and this I will do without telling you why”—that he could not say this—what had the man been who *could* have said it ?

As I kneeled in the darkness by Sigmund’s

little bed, and felt his pillow wet with his silent tears, and his hot cheek touching my hand, I knew it all. I believe I felt for once as a man who has begotten a child and must hurt it, repulse it, part from it, feels.

“No, my child, he cannot tell thee, because he loves thee so dearly,” said I. “But I can tell thee ; I have his leave to tell thee, Sigmund.”

“Friedel?”

“Thou art a very little boy, but thou art not like other boys ; thy father is not just like other fathers.”

“I know it.”

“He is very sad.”

“Yes.”

“And his life which he has to live will be a sad one.”

The child began to weep again. I had to pause. How was I to open my lips to instruct this baby upon the fearful, profound abyss of a subject—the evil and the sorrow that are in the world—how, how force those little tender, bare feet, from the soft grass on to the rough uphill path all strewn with stones,

and all rugged with ups and downs ? It was horribly cruel.

“ Life is very sad sometimes, *mein Sigmund*.”

“ Is it ? ”

“ Yes. Some people, too, are much sadder than others. I think thy father is one of those people. Perhaps thou art to be another.”

“ What my father is I will be,” said he softly ; and I thought that it was another and a holier version of Eugen’s words to me, wrung out of the inner bitterness of his heart. “ The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children, even unto the third and fourth generation, whether they deserve it or not.” The child, who knew nothing of the ancient saying, merely said with love and satisfaction swelling his voice to fulness, “ What my father is, I will be.”

“ Couldst thou give up something very dear for his sake ? ”

“ What a queer question ! ” said Sigmund. “ I want nothing when I am with him.”

“ *Ei, mein Kind !* Thou dost not know what I mean. What is the greatest joy of

thy life ? To be near thy father and see him, hear his voice, and touch him, and feel him near thee ; *nicht ?*"

"Yes," said he in a scarcely audible whisper.

There was a pause, during which I was racking my brains to think of some way of introducing the rest without shocking him too much, when suddenly he said, in a clear, low voice :

"That is it. He would never let me leave him, and he would never leave me."

Silence again for a few moments, which seemed to deepen some sneaking shadow in the boy's mind, for he repeated through clenched teeth, and in a voice which fought hard against conviction, "Never, never, never !"

"Sigmund—never of his own will. But remember what I said, that he is sad, and there is something in his life which makes him not only unable to do what he likes, but *obliged* to do exactly what he does not like—what he most hates and fears—to—to part from thee."

"*Nein, nein, nein !*" said he. "Who can

make him do anything he does not wish ? Who can take me away from him ?”

“ I do not know. I only know that it must be so. There is no escaping from it, and no getting out of it. It is horrible, but it is so. Sometimes, Sigmund, there are things in the world like this.”

“ The world must be a very cruel place,” he said, as if first struck with that fact.

“ Now dost thou understand, Sigmund, why he did not speak ? Couldst thou have told *him* such a thing ?”

“ Where is he ?”

“ There, in the next room, and very sad for thee.”

Sigmund, before I knew what he was thinking of, was out of bed and had opened the door. I saw that Eugen looked up, saw the child standing in the doorway, sprang up, and Sigmund bounded to meet him. A cry as of a great terror came from the child. Self-restraint, so long maintained, broke down ; he cried in a loud, frightened voice :

“ *Mein Vater*, Friedel says I must leave thee !” and burst into a storm of sobs and

crying such as I had never before known him yield to.

Eugen folded him in his arms, laid his head upon his breast, and clasping him very closely to him, paced about the room with him in silence, until the first fit of grief was over. I, from the dark room, watched them in a kind of languor, for I was weary, as though I had gone through some physical struggle.

They passed to and fro, like some moving dream. Bit by bit the child learnt from his father's lips the pitiless truth, down to the last bitter drop: that the parting was to be complete, and they were not to see each other.

"But never, never?" asked Sigmund in a voice of terror and pain mingled.

"When thou art a man that will depend upon thyself," said Eugen. "Thou wilt have to choose."

"Choose what?"

"Whether thou wilt see me again."

"When I am a man *may* I choose?" he asked, raising his head with sudden animation.

"Yes; I shall see to that."

“Oh, very well. I have chosen now,” said Sigmund, and the thought gave him visible joy and relief.

Eugen kissed him passionately. Blessed ignorance of the hardening influences of the coming years ! Blessed tenderness of heart and singleness of affection which could see no possibility that circumstances might make the acquaintance of a now loved and adored superior being appear undesirable ! And blessed sanguineness of five years old, which could bridge the gulf between then and manhood, and cry, *Auf Wiedersehen !*

* * * * *

During the next few days more letters were exchanged. Eugen received one which he answered. Part of the answer he showed to me, and it ran thus :

“I consent to this, but only upon one condition, which is that when my son is eighteen years old, you tell him all, and give him his choice whether he see me again or not. My word is given not to interfere in the matter, and I can trust yours when you promise that it shall be as I stipulate. I want your answer

upon this point, which is very simple, and the single condition I make. It is, however, one which I cannot and will not waive."

"Thirteen years, Eugen," said I.

"Yes; in thirteen years I shall be forty-three."

"You will let me know what the answer to that is?" I went on.

He nodded. By return of post the answer came.

"It is 'yes,'" said he, and paused. "The day after to-morrow he is to go."

"Not alone, surely?"

"No; some one will come for him."

I heard some of the instructions he gave his boy.

"There is one man where you are going, whom I wish you to obey as you would me, Sigmund," he told him.

"Is he like thee?"

"No; much better and wiser than I am. But, remember, he never commands twice. Thou must not question and delay as thou dost with thy weak-minded old father. He is the master in the place thou art going to."

“Is it far from here?”

“Not exceedingly far.”

“Hast thou been there?”

“Oh yes,” said Eugen in a peculiar tone, “often.”

“What must I call this man?” inquired Sigmund.

“He will tell thee that. Do thou obey him and endeavour to do what he wishes, and so thou mayst know thou art best pleasing me.”

“And when I am a man I can choose to see thee again. But where wilt thou be?”

“When the time comes thou wilt soon find me if it is necessary — And thy music,” pursued Eugen. “Remember that in all troubles that may come to thee, and whatever thou mayst pass through, there is one great, beautiful goddess who abides above the troubles of men, and is often most beautiful in the hearts that are most troubled. Remember—whom?”

“Beethoven,” was the prompt reply.

“Just so. And hold fast to the service of the goddess Music, the most beautiful thing in the world.”

“And thou art a musician,” said Sigmund, with a little laugh, as if it “understood itself” that his father should naturally be a priest of “the most beautiful thing in the world.”

I hurry over that short time before the parting came. Eugen said to me :

“They are sending for him—an old servant. I am not afraid to trust him with him.”

And one morning he came—the old servant. Sigmund happened at the moment not to be in the sitting-room ; Eugen and I were. There was a knock, and in answer to our *Heréin!* there entered an elderly man of soldierly appearance, with a grizzled moustache, and stiff, military bearing ; he was dressed in a very plain, but very handsome livery, and on entering the room and seeing Eugen, he paused just within the door, and saluted with a look of deep respect ; nor did he attempt to advance further. Eugen had turned very pale.

It struck me that he might have something to say to this messenger of fate, and with some words to that effect I rose to leave

them together. Eugen laid his hand upon my arm.

"Sit still, Friedhelm." And turning to the man, he added: "How were all when you left, Heinrich?"

"Well, Herr Gr——"

"Courvoisier."

"All were well, *mein Herr*."

"Wait a short time," said he.

A silent inclination on the part of the man. Eugen went into the inner room where Sigmund was, and closed the door. There was silence. How long did it endure? What was passing there? What throes of parting? What grief not to be spoken or described?

Meanwhile the elderly man-servant remained in his sentinel attitude, and with fixed expressionless countenance, within the doorway. Was the time long to him, or short?

At last the door opened, and Sigmund came out alone. God help us all! It is terrible to see such an expression upon a child's soft face. White and set and worn as if with years of suffering was the beautiful

little face. The elderly man started, surprised from his impassiveness, as the child came into the room. An irrepressible flash of emotion crossed his face; he made a step forward. Sigmund seemed as if he did not see us. He was making a mechanical way to the door, when I interrupted him.

“Sigmund, do not forget thy old Friedhelm!” I cried, clasping him in my arms, and kissing his little pale face, thinking of the day, three years ago, when his father had brought him wrapped up in the plaid on that wet afternoon, and my heart had gone out to him.

“*Lieber Friedhelm!*” he said, returning my embrace. “Love my father when I — am gone. And — *auf—auf—Wiedersehen!*”

He loosed his arms from round my neck and went up to the man, saying:

“I am ready.”

The large horny hand clasped round the small delicate one. The servant-man turned, and with a stiff, respectful bow to me, led Sigmund from the room. The door closed

after him—he was gone. The light of two lonely lives was put out. Was our darling right or wrong in that persistent *auf Wiedersehen* of his ?



CHAPTER VII.

“Resignation! Welch’ elendes Hülfsmittel! und doch bleibt es mir das einzig Uebrige.”

Briefe BEETHOVEN’S.

SEVERAL small events which took place at this time had all their indirect but strong bearing on the histories of the characters in this veracious narrative. The great concert of the *Passionsmusik* of Bach came off on the very evening of Sigmund’s departure. It was, I confess, with some fear and trembling that I went to call Eugen to his duties, for he had not emerged from his own room since he had gone into it to send Sigmund away.

He raised his face as I came in; he was sitting looking out of the window, and told

me afterwards that he had sat there, he believed, ever since he had been unable to catch another glimpse of the carriage which bore his darling away from him.

“What is it, Friedel?” he asked, when I came in.

I suggested in a subdued tone that the concert began in half an hour.

“Ah, true!” said he, rising; “I must get ready. Let me see, what is it?”

“The *Passionsmusik*.”

“To be sure! Most appropriate music! I feel as if I could write a Passion Music myself just now.”

We had but to cross the road from our dwelling to the Concert-room. As we entered the corridor two ladies also stepped into it, from a very grand carriage. They were accompanied by a young man, who stood a little to one side to let them pass; and as they came up and we came up, Von Francius came up too.

One of the ladies was May Wedderburn, who was dressed in black, and looked exquisitely lovely, to my eyes, and, I felt, to some others, with her warm auburn hair in shining

coils upon her head. The other was a woman in whose pale, magnificent face I traced some likeness to our fair singer, but she was different; colder, grander, more severe.

It so happened that the ladies barred the way as we arrived, and we had to stand by for a few moments as Von Francius shook hands with Miss Wedderburn, and asked her smilingly if she were in good voice.

She answered, in the prettiest broken German I ever heard, and then turned to the lady, saying :

“Adelaide, may I introduce Herr von Francius—Lady Le Marchant.”

A stately bow from the lady—a deep reverence, with a momentary glance of an admiration warmer than I had ever seen in his eyes, on the part of Von Francius—a glance which was instantly suppressed to one of conventional inexpressiveness. I was pleased and interested with this little peep at a rank which I had never seen, and could have stood watching them for a long time : the splendid beauty and the great pride of bearing of the English lady were a revelation to me ; and opened quite a large, unknown

world before my mental eyes. Romances and poems, and men dying of love, or killing each other for it, no longer seemed ridiculous; for a smile or a warmer glance from that icily beautiful face must be something not to forget.

It was Eugen who pushed forward, with a frown on his brow, and less than his usual courtesy. I saw his eyes and Miss Wedderburn's meet; I saw the sudden flush that ran over her fair face; the stern composure of his. He would own nothing; but I was strangely mistaken if he could say that it was merely because he had nothing to own.

The concert was a success, so far as Miss Wedderburn went. If Von Francius had allowed repetitions, one song at least would have been encored. As it was, she was a success. And Von Francius spent his time in the pauses with her and her sister: in a grave, sedate way he and the English lady seemed to "get on."

The concert was over. The next thing that was of any importance to us occurred shortly afterwards. Von Francius had long been somewhat unpopular with his men, and at silent enmity with Eugen, who was, on the

contrary, a universal favourite. There came a crisis, and the men sent a deputation to Eugen to say that if he would accept the post of leader they would strike, and refuse to accept any other than he.

This was an opportunity for distinguishing himself. He declined the honour: his words were few: he said something about how kind we had all been to him, "from the time when I arrived; when Friedhelm Helfen, here, took me in, gave me every help and assistance in his power, and showed how appropriate his name was;*" and so began a friendship which, please heaven, shall last till death divides us, and perhaps go on afterwards." He ended by saying some words which made a deep impression upon me. After saying that he might possibly leave Elberthal he added, "Lastly, I cannot be your leader because I never intend to be any one's leader—more than I am now," he added, with a faint smile. "A kind of deputy, you know. I am not fit to be a leader. I have no gift in that line——"

"*Doch!*" from half-a-dozen around.

* *Helfen*—to help.

“None whatever. I intend to remain in my present condition—no lower if I can help it, but certainly no higher. I have good reasons for knowing it to be my duty to do so.”

And then he urged them so strongly to stand by Herr von Francius that we were quite astonished. He told them that Von Francius would sometime rank with Schumann, Raff, or Rubinstein, and that the men who rejected him now would then be pointed out as ignorant and prejudiced.

And amid the silence that ensued, he began to direct us—we had a *Probe* to Liszt’s *Prometheus*, I remember.

He had won the day for Von Francius, and Von Francius, getting to hear of it, came one day to see him, and frankly apologised for his prejudice in the past, and asked Eugen for his friendship in the future. Eugen’s answer puzzled me.

“I am glad you know that I honour your genius, and wish you well,” said he, “and your offer of friendship honours me. Suppose I say I accept it—until you see cause to withdraw it.”

“You are putting rather a remote contingency to the front,” said Von Francius.

“Perhaps—perhaps not,” said Eugen, with a singular smile. “At least I am glad to have had this token of your sense of generosity. We are on different paths, and my friends are not on the same level as yours——”

“Excuse me : every true artist must be a friend of every other true artist. We recognise no division of rank or possession.”

Eugen bowed, still smiling ambiguously, nor could Von Francius prevail upon him to say anything nearer or more certain. They parted, and long afterwards I learnt the truth, and knew the bitterness which must have been in Eugen’s heart : the shame, the gloom ; the downcast sorrow, as he refused indirectly but decidedly the thing he would have liked so well—to shake the hand of a man high in position and honourable in name—look him in the face and say, “I accept your friendship—nor need you be ashamed of wearing mine openly.”

He refused the advance : he refused that

and every other opening for advancement. The man seemed to have a horror of advancement, or of coming in any way forward. He rejected even certain offers which were made that he should perform some solos at different concerts in Elberthal and the neighbourhood. I once urged him to become rich and have Sigmund back again. He said: "If I had all the wealth in Germany, it would divide us farther still."

I have said nothing about the blank which Sigmund's absence made in our lives, simply because it was too great a blank to describe. Day after day we felt it, and it grew keener, and the wound smarted more sharply. One cannot work all day long, and in our leisure hours we learnt to know only too well that he was gone--and gone indeed. That which remained to us was the "Resignation," the "miserable assistant" which poor Beethoven indicated with such a bitter smile. We took it to us as inmate and *Hausfreund*, and made what we could of it.



BOOK V.

VÆ VICTIS!

CHAPTER I.

“So runs the world away.”

KÖNIGSALLÉE, No. 3, could scarcely be called a happy establishment. I saw much of its inner life, and what I saw made me feel mortally sad—envy, hatred, and malice; no hour of satisfaction; my sister’s bitter laughs and sneers, and jibes at men and things; Sir Peter’s calm consciousness of his power, and his no less calm, crushing, unvarying manner of wielding it—of silently and horribly making it felt. Adelaide’s very nature appeared to

have changed. From a lofty indifference to most things, to sorrow and joy, to the hopes, fears, and feelings of others, she had become eager, earnest, passionate, resenting ill-usage, strenuously desiring her own way, deeply angry when she could not get it. To say that Sir Peter's influence upon her was merely productive of a negative dislike would be ridiculous. It was productive of an intense, active hatred, a hatred which would gladly, if it could, have vented itself in deeds. That being impossible, it showed itself in a haughty, unbroken indifference of demeanour which it seemed to be Sir Peter's present aim in some way to break down, for not only did she hate him—he hated her.

She used to the utmost what liberty she had. She was not a woman to talk of regret for what she had done, or to own that she had miscalculated her game. Her life was a great failure, and that failure had been brought home to her mind in a mercilessly short space of time; but of what use to bewail it? She was not yet conquered. The bitterness of spirit which she carried about with

her took the form of a scoffing pessimism. A hard laugh at the things which made other people shake their heads and uplift their hands; a ready scoff at all tenderness; a sneer at anything which could by any stretch of imagination be called good; a determined running up of what was hard, sordid, and worldly, and a persistent and utter scepticism as to the existence of the reverse of those things; such was now the yea, yea, and nay, nay, of her communication.

To a certain extent she had what she had sold herself for; outside pomp and show in plenty — carriages, horses, servants, jewels, and clothes. Sir Peter liked, to use his own expression, “to see my lady blaze away” — only she must blaze away in his fashion, not hers. He declared he did not know how long he might remain in Elberthal; spoke vaguely of “business at home,” about which he was waiting to hear, and said that until he heard the news he wanted, he could not move from the place he was in. He was in excellent spirits at seeing his wife chafing under the confinement to a place she detested, and appeared to find life sweet.

Meanwhile she, using her liberty as I said to the utmost extent, had soon plunged into the midst of the fastest set in Elberthal.

There was a fast set there as there was a musical set, an artistic set, a religious set, a free-thinking set ; for though it was not so large or so rich as many dull, wealthy towns in England, it presented from its mixed inhabitants various phases of society.

This set into which Adelaide had thrown herself was the fast one ; a coterie of officers, artists, the richer merchants and bankers, medical men, literati, and the young (and sometimes old) wives, sisters, and daughters of the same ; many of them priding themselves upon not being natives of Elberthal, but coming from larger and gayer towns—Berlin, Dresden, Hamburg, Frankfurt, and others.

They led a gay enough life amongst themselves—a life of theatre, concert, and opera-going, of dances, private at home, public at the Malkasten or Artists' Club, flirtations, marriages, engagements, disappointments, the usual dreary and monotonous round. They considered themselves the only society worthy

the name in Elberthal, and whoever was not of their set was *Niemand*.

I was partly dragged, partly I went to a certain extent of my own will, into this vortex. I felt myself to have earned a larger experience now of life and life's realities. I questioned when I should once have discreetly inclined the head and held my peace. I had a mind to examine this clique and the characters of some of its units, and see in what it was superior to some other acquaintances (in a humbler sphere) with whom my lot had been cast. As time went on I found the points of superiority to decrease—those of inferiority rapidly to increase.

I troubled myself little about them and their opinions. My joys and griefs, hopes and fears, lay so entirely outside their circle that I scarce noticed whether they noticed me or not. I felt and behaved coldly towards them; to the women because their voices never had the ring of genuine liking in speaking to me; to the men because I found them as a rule shallow, ignorant, and pretentious; repellent to me, as I dare say I, with my inability to understand them, was to them.

I saw most men and things through a distorting glass ; that of contrast, conscious or unconscious, with Courvoisier.

My musician, I reasoned, wrongly or rightly, had three times their wit, three times their good looks, manners and information, and many times three times their common sense, as well as a juster appreciation of his own merits : besides which, my musician was not a person whose acquaintance and esteem were to be had for the asking—or even for a great deal more than the asking, while it seemed that these young gentlemen gave their society to any one who could live in a certain style and talk a certain *argot*, and their esteem to every one who could give them often enough the savoury meat that their souls loved, and the wine of a certain quality which made glad their hearts, and rendered them of a cheerful countenance.

But my chief reason for mixing with people who were certainly *as a rule* utterly distasteful and repugnant to me, was because I could not bear to leave Adelaide alone. I pitied her in her lonely alienated misery ; and

I knew that it was some small solace to her to have me with her.

The tale of one day will give an approximate idea of most of the days I spent with her. I was at the time staying with her. Our hours were late. Breakfast was not over till ten, that is by Adelaide and myself. Sir Peter was an exceedingly active person, both in mind and body, who saw after the management of his affairs in England in the minutest manner that absence would allow. Towards half-past eleven he strolled into the room in which we were sitting, and asked what we were doing.

“Looking over costumes,” said I, as Adelaide made no answer, and I raised my eyes from some coloured illustrations.

“Costumes—what kind of costumes?”

“Costumes for the Maskenball,” I answered, taking refuge in brevity of reply.

“Oh!” He paused. Then, turning suddenly to Adelaide :

“And what is this entertainment, my lady?”

“The Carnival Ball,” said she almost inaudibly, between her closed lips, as she

shut the book of illustrations, pushed it away from her, and leaned back in her chair.

“And you think you would like to go to the Carnival Ball, hey?”

“No, I do not,” said she, as she stroked her lapdog with a long white hand on which glittered many rings, and steadily avoided looking at him. She did wish to go to the ball, but she knew that it was as likely as not that if she displayed any such desire he would prevent it. Despite her curt reply she foresaw impending the occurrence which she most of anything disliked—a conversation with Sir Peter. He placed himself in our midst, and requested to look at the pictures. In silence I handed him the book. I never could force myself to smile when he was there, nor overcome a certain restraint of demeanour which rather pleased and flattered him than otherwise. He glanced sharply round in the silence which followed his joining our company, and turning over the illustrations, said :

“I thought I heard some noise when I

came in. Don't let me interrupt the conversation."

But the conversation was more than interrupted; it was dead—the life frozen out of it by his very appearance.

"When is the Carnival, and when does this piece of tomfoolery come off?" he inquired, with winning grace of diction.

"The Carnival begins this year on the 26th of February. The ball is on the 27th," said I, confining myself to facts and figures.

"And how do you get there? By paying?"

"Well, you have to pay—yes. But you must get your tickets from some member of the *Malkasten* Club. It is the artists' ball, and they arrange it all."

"H'm! Ha! And as what do you think of going, Adelaide?" he inquired, turning with suddenness towards her.

"I tell you I had not thought of going—nor thought anything about it. Herr von Francius sent us the pictures, and we were looking over them. That is all."

Sir Peter turned over the pages and

looked at the commonplace costumes therein suggested—Joan of Arc, Cleopatra, Picardy Peasant, Maria Stuart, a Snow Queen, and all the rest of them.

“Well, I don’t see anything here that I would wear if I were a woman,” he said, as he closed the book. “February, did you say?”

“Yes,” said I, as no one else spoke.

“Well, it is the middle of January now. You had better be looking out for something; but don’t let it be anything in those —— books. Let the beggarly daubers see how Englishwomen do these things.”

“Do you intend me to understand that you wish us to go to the ball?” inquired Adelaide in an icy kind of voice.

“Yes, I do,” almost shouted Sir Peter. Adelaide could, despite the whip and rein with which he held her, exasperate and irritate him—by no means more thoroughly than by pretending that she did not understand his grandiloquent allusions, and the vague grandness of the commands which he sometimes gave. “I mean you to go, and your little sister here, and Arkwright too.

I don't know about myself. Now, I am going to ride. Good-morning."

As Sir Peter went out, Von Francius came in. Sir Peter greeted him with a grin, and exaggerated expressions of affability at which Von Francius looked silently scornful. Sir Peter added :

"These two ladies are puzzled to know what they shall wear at the Carnival Ball. Perhaps you can give them your assistance."

Then he went away. It was as if a half-muzzled wolf had left the room.

Von Francius had come to give me my lesson, which was now generally taken at my sister's house and in her presence, and after which Von Francius usually remained some half hour or so in conversation with one or both of us. He had become an *intime* of the house. I was glad of this, and that without him nothing seemed complete, no party rounded, scarcely an evening finished.

When he was not with us in the evening, we were somewhere where he was ; either at a concert or a *Probe*, or at the theatre or opera, or one of the fashionable lectures which were then in season.

It could hardly be said that Von Francius was a more frequent visitor than some other men at the house, but from the first his attitude with regard to Adelaide had been different. Some of those other men were, or professed to be, desperately in love with the beautiful Englishwoman ; there was always a half-gallantry in their behaviour, a homage which might not be very earnest, but which was homage all the same, to a beautiful woman. With Von Francius it had never been thus, but there had been a gravity and depth about their intercourse which pleased me. I had never had the least apprehension with regard to those other people ; she might amuse herself with them ; it would only be amusement, and some contempt.

But Von Francius was a man of another mettle. It had struck me almost from the first that there might be some danger, and I was unfeignedly thankful to see that as time went on, and his visits grew more and more frequent, and the intimacy deeper, not a look, not a sign occurred to hint that it ever was or would be more than acquaintance, liking, appreciation, friendship, in successive stages.

Von Francius had never from the first treated her as an ordinary person, but with a kind of tacit understanding that something not to be spoken of lay behind all she did and said, with the consciousness that the skeleton in Adelaide's cupboard was more ghastly to look upon than most people's secret spectres, and that it persisted, with an intrusiveness and want of breeding peculiar to guests of that calibre, in thrusting its society upon her at all kinds of inconvenient times.

I enjoyed these music lessons, I must confess. Von Francius had begun to teach me music now, as well as singing. By this time I had resigned myself to the conviction that such talent as I might have lay in my voice, not my fingers, and accepted it as part of the conditions which ordain that in every human life shall be something *manqué*, something incomplete.

The most memorable moments with me have been those in which pain and pleasure, yearning and satisfaction, knowledge and seeking, have been so exquisitely and so intangibly blended, in listening to some deep sonata, some stately and pathetic old *Ciac-*

conna or Gavotte, some Concerto or Symphony: the thing nearest heaven is to sit apart with closed eyes while the orchestra or the individual performer interprets for one the mystic poetry, or the dramatic fire, or the subtle cobweb refinements of some instrumental poem.

I would rather have composed a certain little *Träumerei* of Schumann's, or a *Barcarole* of Rubinstein's, or a Sonata of Schubert's, than have won all the laurels of Grisi, all the glory of Malibran and Jenny Lind.

But it was not to be. I told myself so, and yet I tried so hard in my halting, bungling way to worship the goddess of my idolatry, that my master had to restrain me.

"Stop!" said he this morning, when I had been weakly endeavouring to render a *Ciacconna* from a *Suite* of Lachner's, which had moved me to thoughts too deep for tears at the last Symphonie Concert. "Stop, Fräulein May! Duty first: your voice before your fingers."

"Let me try once again!" I implored.

He shut up the music and took it from the desk.

“*Entbehren sollst du ; sollst entbehren !*” said he dryly.

I took my lesson and then practised shakes for an hour, while he talked to Adelaide ; and then, she being summoned to visitors, he went away.

Later I found Adelaide in the midst of a lot of visitors—Herr Hauptmann This, Herr Lieutenant That, Herr Maler The Other, Herr Concertmeister So-and-So—for Von Francius was not the only musician who followed in her train. But there I am wrong. He did not follow in her train ; he might stand aside and watch the others who did ; but following was not in his line.

There were ladies there too—gay young women, who rallied round Lady Le Marchant as around a master spirit in the art of *Zeitvertreib*.

This levée lasted till the bell rang for lunch, when we went into the dining-room, and found Sir Peter and his secretary, young Arkwright, already seated. He—Arkwright

—was a good-natured, tender-hearted lad, devoted to Adelaide. I do not think he was very happy or very well satisfied with his place, but from his salary he half supported a mother and sister, and so was fain to “grin and bear it.”

Sir Peter was always exceedingly affectionate to me. I hated to be in the same room with him, and while I detested him, was also conscious of an unheroic fear of him. For Adelaide’s sake I was as attentive to him as I could make myself, in order to free her a little from his surveillance, for poor Adelaide Wedderburn, with her few pounds of annual pocket-money, and her proud, restless, ambitious spirit, had been a free, contented woman in comparison with Lady Le Marchant.

On the day in question he was particularly amiable, called me “my dear” every time he spoke to me, and complimented me upon my good looks, telling me I was growing monstrous handsome—ay, devilish handsome, by Gad! far outstripping my lady, who had gone off dreadfully in her good looks, hadn’t she, Arkwright?

Poor Arkwright, tingling with a scorching blush, and ready to sink through the floor with confusion, stammered out that he had never thought of venturing to remark upon my Lady Le Marchant's looks.

"What a lie, Arkwright! You know you watch her as if she was the apple of your eye," chuckled Sir Peter, smiling round upon the company with his cold, glittering eyes. "What are you blushing so for, my pretty May? Isn't there a song something about my pretty May, my dearest May, eh?"

"*My pretty Jane*, I suppose you mean," said I, nobly taking his attention upon myself, while Adelaide sat motionless and white as marble, and Arkwright cooled down somewhat from his state of shame and anguish at being called upon to decide which of us eclipsed the other in good looks.

"Pretty Jane! Who ever heard of a pretty Jane?" said Sir Peter. "If it isn't May, it ought to be. At any rate, there was a Charming May."

"The month—not a person."

"Pretty Jane, indeed! You must sing me that after lunch, and then we can see

whether the song was pretty or not, my dear, eh ?”

“Certainly, Sir Peter, if you like.”

“Yes, I do like. My lady here seems to have lost her voice lately. I can’t imagine the reason. I am sure she has everything to make her sing for joy ; have you not, my dear ?”

“Everything, and more than everything,” replies my lady laconically.

“And she has a strong sense of duty, too ; loves those whom she ought to love, and despises those whom she ought to despise. She always has done, from her infancy up to the time when she loved me and despised public opinion for my sake.”

The last remark was uttered in tones of deeper malignity, while the eyes began to glare, and the under lip to droop, and the sharp eye teeth, which lent such a very emphatic point to all Sir Peter’s smiles, sneers, and facial movements in general, gleamed.

Adelaide’s lip quivered for a second ; her colour momentarily faded.

In this kind of light and agreeable badinage the meal passed over, and we were followed

to the drawing-room by Sir Peter, loudly demanding “‘My Pretty Jane’—or May, or whatever it was.”

“We are going out,” said my lady. “You can have it another time. May cannot sing the moment she has finished lunch.”

“Hold your tongue, my dear,” said Sir Peter; and inspired by an agreeable and playful humour, he patted his wife’s shoulder and pinched her ear.

The colour fled from her very lips, and she stood pale and rigid, with a look in her eyes which I interpreted to mean a shuddering recoil, stopped by sheer force of will.

Sir Peter turned with an engaging laugh to me :

“Miss May—bonnie May—made me a promise, and she must keep it; or if she doesn’t, I shall take the usual forfeit. We know what that is. Upon my word, I almost wish she would break her promise.”

“I have no wish to break my promise,” said I, hastening to the piano, and then and there singing, “My Pretty Jane,” and one or two others,[”] after which he released us,

chuckling at having contrived to keep my lady so long waiting for her drive.

The afternoon's programme was, I confess, not without attraction to me ; for I knew that I was pretty, and I had not one of the strong and powerful minds which remain unelated by admiration, and undepressed by the absence of it.

We drove to the picture exhibitions, and at both of them had a little crowd attending us. That crowd consisted chiefly of admirers, or professed admirers, of my sister, with Von Francius in addition, who dropped in at the first exhibition.

Von Francius did not attend my sister ; it was by my side that he remained, and it was to me that he talked. He looked on at the men who were around her, but scarcely addressed her himself.

There was a clique of young artists who chose to consider the wealth of Sir Peter Le Marchant as fabulous, and who paid court to his wife from mixed motives ; the prevailing one being a hope that she would be smitten by some picture of theirs at a fancy price, and order it to be sent home—as if she ever

saw with anything beyond the most superficial outward eye those pictures, and as if it lay in her power to order any one, even the smallest and meanest of them. These ingenuous artists had yet to learn that Sir Peter's picture purchases were formed from his own judgment, through the medium of himself or his secretary, armed with strict injunctions as to price, and upon the most purely practical and business-like principles—not in the least at the caprice of his wife.

We went to the larger gallery last. As we entered it I turned aside with Von Francius to look at a picture in a small back room, and when we turned to follow the others, they had all gone forward into the large room; but standing at the door by which we had entered, and looking calmly after us, was Courvoisier.

A shock thrilled me. It was some time since I had seen him; for I had scarcely been at my lodgings for a fortnight, and we had had no *Hauptproben* lately. I had heard some rumour that important things—or, as Frau Lützler gracefully expressed it, *was Wichtiges*—had taken place between Von Francius and

the Kapelle, and that Courvoisier had taken a leading part in the affair. To-day the greeting between the two men was a cordial, if a brief one.

Eugen's eyes scarcely fell upon me ; he included me in his bow—that was all. All my little day-dream of growing self-complacency was shattered, scattered ; the old feeling of soreness, smallness, wounded pride, and bruised self-esteem came back again. I felt a wild, angry desire to *compel* some other glance from those eyes than that exasperating one of quiet indifference. I felt it like a lash every time I encountered it. Its very coolness and absence of emotion stung me and made me quiver.

We and Courvoisier entered the large room at the same time. While Adelaide was languidly making its circuit, Von Francius and I sat down upon the ottoman in the middle of the room. I watched Eugen, even if he took no notice of me—watched him till every feeling of rest, every hard-won conviction of indifference to him, and feeling of regard conquered, came tumbling down in ignominious ruins. I knew he had had a fiery trial. His

child, for whom I used to watch his adoration with a dull kind of envy, had left him. There was some mystery about it, and much pain. Frau Lützler had begun to tell me a long story culled from one told her by Frau Schmidt, and I had stopped her, but knew that "Herr Courvoisier was not like the same man any more."

That trouble was visible in firmly-marked lines, even now: he looked subdued, older, and his face was thin and worn. Yet never had I noticed so plainly before the bright light of intellect in his eye; the noble stamp of mind upon his brow. There was more than the grace of a kindly nature in the pleasant curve of the lips—there was thought, power, intellectual strength. I compared him with the young men who were at this moment dangling round my sister. Not one amongst them could approach him—not merely in stature and breadth and the natural grace and dignity of carriage, but in far better things—in the mind that dominates sense; the will that holds back passion with a hand as strong and firm as that of a master over the dog whom he chooses to obey him.

This man—I write from knowledge—had the capacity to appreciate and enjoy life—to taste its pleasures—never to excess, but with no ascetic's lips. But the natural prompting—the moral “eat, drink and be merry,” was held back with a ruthless hand; with chain of iron, and biting thong to chastise pitilessly each restive movement. He dredged out his weird most thoroughly, and drank the cup presented to him to the last dregs.

When the weird is very long and hard—when the flavour of the cup is exceeding bitter, this process leaves its effects in the form of sobered mien, gathering wrinkles, and a permanent shadow on the brow, and in the eyes. So it was with him.

He went round the room, looking at a picture here and there with the eye of a connoisseur—then pausing before the one which Von Francius had brought me to look at on Christmas-day, Courvoisier, folding his arms, stood before it and surveyed it, straitly, and without moving a muscle: coolly, criticisingly and very fastidiously. The blasé-looking individual in the foreground received,

I saw, a share of his attention—the artist, too, in the background ; the model, with the white dress, oriental fan, bare arms, and half-bored, half-cynic look. He looked at them all long—attentively—then turned away ; the only token of approval or disapproval which he vouchsafed being a slight smile and a slight shrug, both so very slight as to be almost imperceptible. Then he passed on—glanced at some other pictures—at my sister, on whom his eyes dwelt for a moment as if he thought that she at least made a very beautiful picture ; then out of the room.

“ Do you know him ? ” said Von Francius, quite softly, to me.

I started violently. I had utterly forgotten that he was at my side, and I know not what tales my face had been telling. I turned to find the dark and impenetrable eyes of Von Francius fixed on me.

“ A little,” I said.

“ Then you know a generous, high-minded man—a man who has made me feel ashamed of myself—and a man to whom I made an apology the other day, with pleasure.”

My heart warmed. This praise of Eugen by a man whom I admired so devotedly as I did Max von Francius seemed to put me right with myself and the world.

Soon afterwards we left the exhibition, and while the others went away it appeared somehow by the merest casualty that Von Francius was asked to drive back with us and have afternoon tea, *englischerweise*—which he did, after a moment's hesitation.

After tea he left for an orchestra Probe to the next Saturday's concert; but with an *Auf Wiedersehen*, for the Probe will not last long, and we shall meet again at the opera and later at the Malkasten Ball.

I enjoyed going to the theatre. I knew my dress was pretty. I knew that I looked nice, and that people would look at me, and that I, too, should have my share of admiration and compliments as a *schöne Engländerin*.

We are twenty minutes late—naturally. All the people in the place stare at us and whisper about us, partly because we have a conspicuous place; the proscenium Loge to the right of the stage, partly because we are

in full toilette—an almost unprecedented circumstance in that homely theatre—partly, I suppose, because Adelaide is supremely beautiful.

Mr. Arkwright was already with us. Von Francius joined us after the first act, and remained until the end. Almost the only words he exchanged with Adelaide were :

“Have you seen this opera before, Lady Le Marchant?”

“No ; never.”

It was Auber's merry little opera, *Des Teufels Antheil*. The play was played. Von Francius was beside me. Whenever I looked down I saw Eugen, with the same calm, placid indifference upon his face ; and again I felt the old sensation of soreness, shame and humiliation. I feel wrought up to a great pitch of nervous excitement when we leave the theatre and drive to the Malkasten, where there is more music—dance music ; and where the ball is at its height. And in a few moments I find myself whirling down the room in the arms of Von Francius, to the music of *Mein schönster Tag in Baden*, and wishing very earnestly that the heart-

sickness I feel would make me ill or faint, or anything that would send me home to quietness and—him. But it does not have the desired effect. I am in a fever: I am all too vividly conscious, and people tell me how well I am looking, and that rosy cheeks become me better than pale ones.

They are merry parties, these dances at the Malkasten, in the quaintly-decorated saal of the artists' club-house. There is a certain license in the dress. Velvet coats, and coats, too, in many colours, green and prune and claret, vieing with black, are not tabooed. There are various uniforms of Hussars, Infantry, and Uhlans, and some of the women, too, are dressed in a certain fantastically picturesque style to please their artist brothers or fiancés.

The dancing gets faster, and the festivities are kept up late. Songs are sung which perhaps would not be heard in a quiet drawing-room; a little acting is done with them. Music is played, and Von Francius, in a vagrant mood, sits down and improvises a fitful, stormy kind of fantasia, which in itself and in his playing puts me much in mind

of the weird performances of the Abbate Liszt.

I at least hear another note than of yore, another touch. The soul that it wanted seems gradually creeping into it. He tells a strange story upon the quivering keys—it is becoming tragic, sad, pathetic. He says hastily to me and in an undertone, “Fräulein May, this is a thought of one of your own poets :

“‘How sad, and mad, and bad it was,
And yet how it was sweet.’”

I am almost in tears, and every face is affording illustrations for “The Expressions of the Emotions in Men and Women,” when it suddenly breaks off with a loud Ha! ha! ha! which sounds as if it came from a human voice, and jars upon me, and then he breaks into a waltz, pushing the astonished musicians aside, and telling the company to dance while he pipes.

A mad dance to a mad tune. He plays and plays on, ever faster, and ever a wilder measure, with strange eerie, clanging chords in it which are not like dance notes, until Adelaide prepares to go, and then he sud-

denly ceases, springs up, and comes with us to our carriage. Adelaide looks white and worn.

Again at the carriage door, "a pair of words" passes between them.

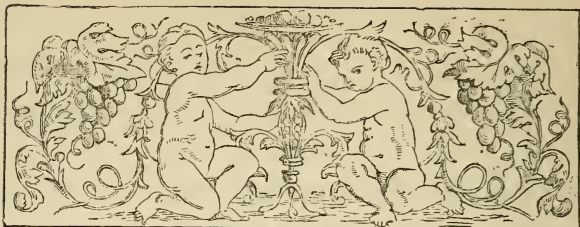
"Milady is tired?" from him, in a courteous tone, as his dark eyes dwell upon her face.

"Thanks, Herr Direktor, I am generally tired," from her, with a slight smile, as she folds her shawl across her breast with one hand, and extends the other to him.

"Milady, adieu."

"Adieu, Herr von Francius."

The ball is over, and I think we have all had enough of it.



CHAPTER II.

THE CARNIVAL BALL.

“**W**AREN’T you coming to the ball, Eugen?”
“I? No.”

“I would if I were you.”

“But you are yourself, you see, and I am I. What was it that Heinrich Mohr in ‘The Children of the World’ was always saying? *Ich bin ich, und setze mich selbst.* Ditto me, that’s all.”

“It is no end of a lark,” I pursued.

“My larking days are over.”

“And you can talk to any one you like.”

“I am going to talk to myself, thanks. I have long wanted a little conversation with that interesting individual, and while you are

masquerading, I will be doing the reverse. By the time you come home I shall be so thoroughly self-investigated and set to rights, that a mere look at me will shake all the frivolity out of you."

"Miss Wedderburn will be there."

"I hope she may enjoy it."

"At least she will look so lovely that she will make others enjoy it."

He made no answer.

"You won't go—quite certain?"

"Quite certain, *mein Lieber*. Go yourself, and may you have much pleasure!"

Finding that he was in earnest, I went out to hire one domino and purchase one mask, instead of furnishing myself, as I had hoped, with two of each of those requisites.

It was Sunday, the first day of the Carnival, and that devoted to *the* ball of the season. There were others given, but this was the *Malerball*, or artists' ball. It was considered rather select, and had I not been lucky enough to have one or two pupils, members of the club, who had come forward with offerings of tickets, I might have tried in vain to gain admittance.

Everybody in Elberthal who was anybody would be at this ball. I had already been at one like it, as well as at several of the less select and rougher entertainments, and I found a pleasure which was somewhat strange even to myself in standing to one side and watching the motley throng and the formal procession which was every year organised by the artists who had the management of the proceedings.

The ball began at the timely hour of seven ; about nine I enveloped myself in my domino, and took my way across the road to the scene of the festivities, which took up the whole three saals of the Tonhalle.

The night was bitter cold, but cold with that rawness which speaks of a coming thaw. The lamps were lighted, and despite the cold there was a dense crowd of watchers round the front of the building and in the gardens, with cold, inquisitive noses flattened against the long glass doors through which I have seen the people stream in the pleasant May evenings after the concert or *Musikfest* into the illuminated gardens.

The last time I had been in the big saal

had been to attend a dry Probe to a dry concert—the “Erste Walpurgisnacht” of Mendelssohn. The scene was changed now; the whole room was a mob—“motley the only wear.” It was full to excess, so that there was scarcely room to move about, much less for dancing. For that purpose the middle saal of the three had been set aside, or rather a part of it railed off.

I felt a pleasant sense of ease and well-being—a security that I should not be recognised, as I had drawn the pointed hood of my domino over my head, and enveloped myself closely in its ample folds, and thus I could survey the brilliant *Maskenball* as I surveyed life from a quiet, unnoticed obscurity, and without taking part in its active affairs.

There was music going on as I entered. It could scarcely be heard above the babel of tongues which was sounding. People were moving as well as they could. I made my way slowly and unobtrusively towards the upper end of the saal, intending to secure a place on the great orchestra, and thence survey the procession.

I recognised dozens of people whom I knew personally, or by sight, or name, transformed from sober Rhenish *Bürger*, or youths of the period, into persons and creatures whose appropriateness or inappropriateness to their every-day character it gave me much joy to witness. The most foolish young man I knew was attired as Cardinal Richelieu; the wisest, in certain respects, had a buffoon's costume, and plagued the statesman and churchman grievously.

By degrees I made my way through the mocking, taunting, flouting, many-coloured crowd, to the orchestra, and gradually up its steps until I stood upon a fine vantage-ground. Near me were others: I looked round. One party seemed to keep very much together—a party which for richness and correctness of costume outshone all others in the room. Two ladies, one dark and one fair, were dressed as Elsa and Ortrud. A man, whose slight, tall, commanding figure I soon recognised, was attired in the blue mantle, silver helm and harness of Lohengrin the son of Percivale; and a second man,

too boyish-looking for the character, was masked as Frederic of Telramund. Henry the Fowler was wanting, but the group were easily to be recognised as personating the four principal characters from Wagner's great opera.

They had apparently not been there long, for they had not yet unmasked. I had, however, no difficulty in recognising any of them. The tall, fair girl in the dress of Elsa, was Miss Wedderburn; the Ortrud was Lady Le Marchant, and right well she looked the character. Lohengrin was Von Francius, and Friedrich von Telramund was Mr. Arkwright, Sir Peter's secretary. Here was a party in whom I could take some interest, and I immediately and in the most unprincipled manner devoted myself to watching them—myself unnoticed.

“Who in all that motley crowd would I wish to be?” I thought, as my eyes wandered over them.

The procession was just forming; the voluptuous music of *Die Tausend und eine Nacht* waltzes was floating from the gallery and through the room. They went sweeping

past—or running, or jumping ; a ballet-girl whose moustache had been too precious to be parted with, and a lady of the *vielle cour* beside her, nuns and corpses ; Christy Minstrels (English, these last, whose motives were constantly misunderstood), fools and astrologers, Gretchens, Clärchens, devils, Egmonts, Joans of Arc enough to have rescued France a dozen times ; and peasants of every race ; Turks and Finns ; American Indians and Alfred the Great—it was tedious and dazzling.

Then the procession was got into order : a long string of German legends, all the misty chronicle of Gudrun, the *Nibelungenlied* and the Rheingold—Siegfried and Kriemhild—those two everlasting figures of beauty and heroism, love and tragedy, which stand forth in hues of pure brightness that no time can dim ; Brunhild and Von Tronje-Hagen—this was before the days of Bayreuth and the Tetralogy—Tannhäuser and Lohengrin, the Loreley, Walther von der Vogelweide, the two Elizabeths of the Wartburg, dozens of obscure legends and figures from *Volkslieder* and Folklore which I did not recognise ;

Dornröschen, Rubezahl; and the music to which they marched, was the melancholy yet noble measure, "The Last Ten of the Fourth Regiment."

I surveyed the masks and masquerading for some time, keeping my eye all the while upon the party near me. They presently separated. Lady Le Marchant took the arm which Von Francius offered her, and they went down the steps. Miss Wedderburn and the young secretary were left alone. I was standing near them, and two other masks, both in domino, hovered about. One wore a white domino with a scarlet rosette on the breast. The other was a black domino, closely disguised, who looked long after Von Francius and Lady Le Marchant, and presently descended the orchestra steps and followed in their wake.

"Do not remain with me, Mr. Arkwright," I heard Miss Wedderburn say. "You want to dance. Go and enjoy yourself."

"I could not think of leaving you alone, Miss Wedderburn."

"Oh yes, you could, and can. I am not going to move from here. I want to look on

—not to dance. You will find me here when you return.”

Again she urged him not to remain with her, and finally he departed in search of amusement amongst the crowd below.

Miss Wedderburn was now alone. She turned; her eyes, through her mask, met mine through my mask, and a certain thrill shot through me. This was such an opportunity as I had never hoped for, and I told myself that I should be a great fool if I let it slip. But how to begin? I looked at her. She was very beautiful, this young English girl, with the wonderful blending of fire and softness which had made me from the first think her one of the most attractive women I had ever seen.

As I stood, awkward and undecided, she beckoned me to her. In an instant I was at her side, bowing but maintaining silence.

“You *are* Herr Helfen, *nicht wahr?*” said she inquiringly.

“Yes,” said I, and removed my mask. “How did you know it?”

“Something in your figure and attitude. Are you not dancing?”

“I—oh no!”

“Nor I—I am not in the humour for it. I never felt less like dancing, nor less like a masquerade.” Then—hesitatingly, “Are you alone to-night?”

“Yes. Eugen would not come.”

“He will not be here at all?”

“Not at all.”

“I am surprised.”

“I tried to persuade him to come,” said I apologetically. “But he would not. He said he was going to have a little conversation at home with himself.”

“So!” She turned to me with a mounting colour, which I saw flush to her brow above her mask, and with parted lips.

“He has never cared for anything since Sigmund left us,” I continued.

“Sigmund—was that the dear little boy?”

“You say very truly.”

“Tell me about him. Was not his father very fond of him?”

“Fond! I never saw a man idolise his

child so much. It was only need—the hardest need that made them part.”

“How—need? You do not mean poverty?” said she, somewhat awestruck.

“Oh no! Moral necessity. I do not know the reason. I have never asked. But I know it was like a death-blow.”

“Ah!” said she, and with a sudden movement removed her mask, as if she felt it stifling her, and looked me in the face with her beautiful clear eyes.

“Who could *oblige* him to part with his own child?” she asked.

“That I do not know, *mein Fräulein*. What I do know is that some shadow darkens my friend’s life and embitters it—that he not only cannot do what he wishes, but is forced to do what he hates—and that parting was one of the things.”

She looked at me with eagerness for some moments; then said quickly:

“I cannot help being interested in all this, but I fancy I ought not to listen to it, for—for—I don’t think he would like it. He—he—I believe he dislikes me, and perhaps you had better say no more.”

“*Dislikes* you !” I echoed. “Oh no !”

“Oh yes ! he does,” she repeated with a faint smile, which struggled for a moment with a look of pain, and then was extinguished. “I certainly was once very rude to him, but I should not have thought he was an ungenerous man—should you ?”

“He is not ungenerous : the very reverse : he is too generous.”

“It does not matter, I suppose,” said she, repressing some emotion. “It can make no difference, but it pains me to be so misunderstood and so behaved to by one who was at first so kind to me—for he was very kind.”

“*Mein Fräulein*,” said I, eager, though puzzled, “I cannot explain it : it is as great a mystery to me as to you. I know nothing of his past—nothing of what he has been or done ; nothing of who he is—only of one thing I am sure—that he is not what he seems to be. He may be called Eugen Courvoisier : or he may call himself Eugen Courvoisier : he was once known by *some* name in a very different world to that he lives in now. I know nothing about that, but I know this—that *I believe in him*. I

have lived more than three years with him : he is true and honourable : fantastically, chivalrously honourable" (her eyes were downcast and her cheeks burning). "He never did anything false or dishonest——"

A slight, low, sneering laugh at my right hand caused me to look up. That figure in a white domino with a black mask, and a crimson rosette on the breast, stood leaning up against the foot of the organ, but other figures were near : the laugh might have come from one of them : it might have nothing to do with us or our remarks. I went on in a vehement and eager tone :

"He is what we Germans call a *ganzer Kerl*—thorough in all—out and out good. Nothing will ever make me believe otherwise. Perhaps the mystery will never be cleared up. It doesn't matter to me. It will make no difference in my opinion of the only man I love."

A pause. Miss Wedderburn was looking at me : her eyes were full of tears : her face strangely moved. Yes—she loved him. It stood confessed in the very strength of the effort she made to be calm and com-

posed. As she opened her lips to speak, that domino that I mentioned glided from her place and stooping down between us, whispered or murmured :

“ You are a fool for your pains. Believe no one—least of all those who look most worthy of belief. He is *not* honest ! he is *not* honourable. It is from shame and disgrace that he hides himself. Ask him if he remembers the 20th of April five years ago ; you will hear what he has to say about it, and how brave and *honourable* he looks.”

Swift as fire the words were said, and rapidly as the same she had raised herself and disappeared. We were left gazing at one another. Miss Wedderburn’s face was blanched—she stared at me with large dilated eyes, and at last in a low voice of anguish and apprehension said :

“ Oh, what does it mean ?”

Her voice recalled me to myself.

“ *It* may mean what it likes,” said I calmly. “ As I said, it makes no difference to me. I do not and will not believe that he ever did anything dishonourable.”

“Do you not?” said she tremulously. “But — but — Anna Sartorius does know something of him.”

“Who is Anna Sartorius?”

“Why, that domino who spoke to us just now. But I forgot. You will not know her. She wanted long ago to tell me about him, and I would not let her, so she said I might learn for myself, and should never leave off until I knew the lesson by heart. I think she has kept her word,” she added, with a heart-sick sigh.

“You surely would not believe her if she said the same thing fifty times over,” said I, not very reasonably, certainly.

“I do not know,” she replied hesitatingly. “It is very difficult to know.”

“Well, I would not. If the whole world accused him I would believe nothing except from his own lips.”

“I wish I knew all about Anna Sartorius,” said she slowly, and she looked as if seeking back in her memory to remember some dream. I stood beside her; the motley crowd ebbed and flowed beneath us, but the whisper we had heard had changed every-

thing; and yet, no—to me not changed, but only darkened things.

In the meantime it had been growing later. Our conversation, with its frequent pauses, had taken a longer time than we had supposed. The crowd was thinning. Some of the women were going.

“I wonder where my sister is!” observed Miss Wedderburn rather wearily. Her face was pale, and her delicate head drooped as if it were overweighed and pulled down by the superabundance of her beautiful chestnut hair, which came rippling and waving over her shoulders. A white satin petticoat, stiff with gold embroidery; a long trailing blue mantle of heavy brocade, fastened on the shoulders with golden clasps; a golden circlet in the gold of her hair; such was the dress, and right royally she became it. She looked a vision of loveliness. I wondered if she would ever act Elsa in reality; she would be assuredly the loveliest representative of that fair and weak-minded heroine who ever trod the boards. Supposing it ever came to pass that she acted Elsa to some one else’s Lohengrin, would she think of this night? Would

she remember the great orchestra—and me, and the lights, and the people—our words—a whisper?

A pause.

“But where can Adelaide be?” she said at last. “I have not seen them since they left us.”

“They are there,” said I, surveying from my vantage-ground the thinning ranks. “They are coming up here too. And there is the other gentleman, Graf von Telramund, following them.”

They drew up to the foot of the orchestra, and then Mr. Arkwright came up to seek us.

“Miss Wedderburn, Lady Le Marchant is tired, and thinks it is time to be going.”

“So am I tired,” she replied. I stepped back, but before she went away she turned to me, holding out her hand:

“Good-night, Herr Helfen. I, too, will not believe without proof.”

We shook hands, and she went away.

The lamp still burning: the room cold, the stove extinct. Eugen seated motionless near it.

“Eugen, art thou asleep?”

“I asleep, my dear boy! Well, how was it?”

“Eugen, I wish you had been there.”

“Why?” He roused himself with an effort, and looked at me. His brow was clouded, his eyes too.

“Because you would have enjoyed it. I did. I saw Miss Wedderburn, and spoke to her. She looked lovely.”

“In that case it would have been odd indeed if you had not enjoyed yourself.”

“You are inexplicable.”

“It is bedtime,” he remarked, rising and speaking, as I thought, coldly.

We both retired. As for the Whisper, frankly and honestly, I did not give it another thought.



CHAPTER III.

TRÄUMEREI.



SCHUMANN.

FOLLOWING Arkwright, I joined Adelaide and Von Francius at the foot of the orchestra. She had sent word that she was tired. Looking at

her, I thought indeed she must be *very* tired, so white, so sad she looked.

“Adelaide,” I expostulated, “why did you remain so long?”

“Oh, I did not know it was so late. Come!”

We made our way out of the hall through the verandah to the entrance. Lady Le Marchant’s carriage, it seemed, was ready and waiting. It was a pouring night. The thaw had begun. The steady downpour promised a cheerful ending to the Carnival doings of the Monday and Tuesday; all but a few homeless or persevering wretches had been driven away. We drove away too. I noticed that the “good-night” between Adelaide and Von Francius was of the most laconical character. They barely spoke, did not shake hands, and he turned and went to seek his cab before we had all got into the carriage.

Adelaide uttered not a word during our drive home, and I, leaning back, shut my eyes and lived the evening over again. Eugen’s friend had laughed the insidious whisper to scorn. I could not deal so summarily with it; nor could I drive the words

of it out of my head. They set themselves to the tune of the waltz, and rang in my ears :

“He is *not* honest ; he is *not* honourable. It is from shame and disgrace that he is hiding. Ask him if he remembers the 20th of April five years ago.”

The carriage stopped. A sleepy servant let us in. Adelaide, as we went upstairs, drew me into her dressing-room.

“A moment, May. Have you enjoyed yourself?”

“H’m—well—yes, and no. And you, Adelaide?”

“I never enjoy myself now,” she replied very gently. “I am getting used to that, I think.”

She clasped her jewelled hands, and stood by the lamp, whose calm light lit her calm face, showing it wasted and unutterably sad.

Something—a terror, a shrinking as from a strong menacing hand—shook me.

“Are you ill, Adelaide?” I cried.

“No. Good-night, dear May. *Schlaf’ wohl*, as they say here.”

To my unbounded astonishment, she leaned forward, and gave me a gentle kiss ; then, still holding my hand, asked :

“Do you still say your prayers, May ?”

“Sometimes.”

“What do you say ?”

“Oh ! the same that I always used to say ; they are better than any I can invent.”

“Yes. I never do say mine now. I rather think I am afraid to begin again.”

“Good-night, Adelaide,” I said inaudibly ; and she loosed my hand.

At the door I turned. She was still standing by the lamp ; still her face wore the same strange, subdued look. With a heart oppressed by new uneasiness, I left her.

It must have been not till towards dawn that I fell into a sleep, heavy, but not quiet—filled with fantastic dreams, most of which vanished as soon as they had passed my mind. But one remained. To this day it is as vivid before me, as if I had actually lived through it.

Meseemed again to be at the Grafenbergerdahl, again to be skating, again

rescued—and by Eugen Courvoisier. But suddenly the scene changed ; from a smooth sheet of ice, across which the wind blew nippingly, and above which the stars twinkled frostily, there was a huge waste of water which raged, while a tempest howled around—the clear moon was veiled, all was darkness and chaos. He saved me, not by skating with me to the shore, but by clinging with me to some floating wood until we drove upon a bank and landed. But scarcely had we set foot upon the ground, than all was changed again. I was alone, seated upon a bench in the *Hofgarten*, on a spring afternoon. It was May ; the chestnuts and acacias were in full bloom, and the latter made the air heavy with their fragrance. The nightingales sang richly, and I sat looking, from beneath the shade of a great tree, upon the fleeting Rhine, which glided by almost past my feet. It seemed to me that *I had been* sad—so sad as never before. A deep weight appeared to have been just removed from my heart, and yet so heavy had it been that I could not at once recover from its pressure ; and even then, in the sunshine,

and feeling that I had no single cause for care or grief, I was unhappy, with a reflex mournfulness.

And as I sat thus, it seemed that some one came and sat beside me without speaking, and I did not turn to look at him; but ever as I sat there and felt that he was beside me, the sadness lifted from my heart, until it grew so full of joy that tears rose to my eyes. Then he who was beside me placed his hand upon mine, and I looked at him. It was Eugen Courvoisier. His face and his eyes were full of sadness; but I knew that he loved me, though he said but one word, "Forgive!" to which I answered, "Can *you* forgive?" But I knew that I alluded to something much deeper than that silly little episode of having cut him at the theatre. He bowed his head; and then I thought I began to weep, covering my face with my hands; but they were tears of exquisite joy, and the peace at my heart was the most entire I had ever felt. And he loosened my hands, and drew me to him and kissed me, saying "My love!" And as I felt—yes, actually felt—the pressure of his lips upon

mine, and felt the spring shining upon me, and heard the very echo of the twitter of the birds, saw the light fall upon the water, and smelt the scent of the acacias, and saw the *Lotusblume* as she—

“Duftet und weinet und zittert
Vor Liebe und Liebesweh,”

I awoke, and confronted a grey February morning, felt a raw chilliness in the air, heard a cold, pitiless rain driven against the window; knew that my head ached, my heart harmonised therewith; that I was awake, not in a dream; that there had been no spring morning, no acacias, no nightingales: above all, no love—remembered last night, and roused to the consciousness of another day, the necessity of waking up and living on.

Nor could I rest or sleep. I rose, and contemplated through the window the driving rain and the soaking street, the sorrowful naked trees, the plain of the parade ground, which looked a mere waste of mud and half-melted ice; the long plain line of the Caserne itself—a cheering prospect, truly!

When I went downstairs I found Sir Peter, in heavy travelling overcoat, standing in the hall ; a carriage stood at the door ; his servant was putting in his master's luggage and rugs. I paused, in astonishment. Sir Peter looked at me and smiled, with the dubious benevolence which he was in the habit of extending to me.

“I am very sorry to be obliged to quit your charming society, Miss Wedderburn, but business calls me imperatively to England ; and, at least, I am sure that my wife cannot be unhappy with such a companion as her sister.”

“You are going to England ?”

“I am going to England. I have been called so hastily that I can make no arrangements for Adelaide to accompany me, and indeed it would not be at all pleasant for her, as I am only going on business ; but I hope to return for her and bring her home in a few weeks. I am leaving Arkwright with you. He will see that you have all you want.”

Sir Peter was smiling, ever smiling, with the smile which was my horror.

“A brilliant ball, last night, was it not?” he added, extending his hand to me, in farewell, and looking at me intently with eyes that fascinated and repelled me at once.

“Very, but—but—you were not there?”

“Was I not? I have a strong impression that I was. Ask my lady if she thinks I was there. And now good-bye, and *au revoir!*”

He loosened my hand, descended the steps, entered the carriage, and was driven away. His departure ought to have raised a great weight from my mind, but it did not: it impressed me with a sense of coming disaster.

Adelaide breakfasted in her room. When I had finished I went to her. Her behaviour puzzled me. She seemed elated, excited, at the absence of Sir Peter, and yet, suddenly turning to me, she exclaimed eagerly:

“Oh, May! I wish I had been going to England, too! I wish I could leave this place, and never see it again!”

“Was Sir Peter at the ball, Adelaide?” I asked.

She turned suddenly pale: her lip trem-

bled ; her eye wavered, as she said in a low, uneasy voice :

“ I believe he was—yes ; in domino.”

“ What a sneaking thing to do !” I remarked candidly. “ He had told us particularly that he was *not* coming.”

“ That very statement should have put us on our guard,” she remarked.

“ On our guard ? Against what ?” I asked unsuspectingly.

“ Oh, nothing—nothing ! I wonder when he will return ! I would give a world to be in England !” she said, with a heart-sick sigh ; and I, feeling very much bewildered, left her.

In the afternoon, despite wind and weather, I sallied forth, and took my way to my old lodgings in the *Wehrhahn*. Crossing a square leading to the street I was going to, I met Anna Sartorius. She bowed, looking at me mockingly. I returned her salutation, and remembered last night again, with painful distinctness. The air seemed full of mysteries and uncertainties : they clung about my mind like cobwebs, and I could not get rid of their soft, stifling influence.

Having arrived at my lodgings, I mounted the stairs. Frau Lützler met me.

“*Nu na, Fräulein!* You do not patronise me much now. My rooms are becoming too small for you, I reckon.”

“Indeed, Frau Lützler, I wish I had never been in any larger ones,” I answered her earnestly.

“So! Well, ’tis true you look thin and worn—not as well as you used to. And were you—but I heard you were, so where’s the use of telling lies about it—at the *Maskenball* last night? And how did you like it?”

“Oh, it was all very new to me. I never was at one before.”

“*Nicht?* Then you *must* have been astonished. They say there was a Mephisto so good he would have deceived the devil himself. And you, Fräulein—I heard that you looked very beautiful.”

“So! It must have been a mistake.”

“*Doch nicht!* I have always maintained that at certain times you were far from bad-looking, and dressed and got up for the stage, would be absolutely handsome. Nearly any one can be that—if you are not too near the

footlights, that is, and don't go behind the scenes."

With which neat slaying of a particular compliment by a general one, she released me, and let me go on my way upstairs.

Here I had some books and some music. But the room was cold; the books failed to interest me, and the music did not go—the piano was like me—out of tune. And yet I felt the need of some musical expression of the mood that was upon me. I bethought myself of the *Tonhalle*, next door, almost, and that in the *Rittersaal* it would be quiet and undisturbed, as the ball that night was not to be held there, but in one of the large rooms of the *Caserne*.

Without pausing to think a second time of the plan I left the house, and went to the *Tonhalle*, only a few steps away. In consequence of the rain and bad weather almost every trace of the Carnival had disappeared. I found the *Tonhalle* deserted save by a barmaid at the *Restauration*. I asked her if the *Rittersaal* were open, and she said yes. I passed on. As I drew near the door I heard music: the piano was already being

played. Could it be Von Francius who was there? I did not think so. The touch was not his—neither so practised, so brilliant, nor so sure.

Satisfied, after listening a moment, that it was not he, I resolved to go in and pass through the room. If it were any one whom I could send away I would do so, if not, I could go away again myself.

I entered. The room was somewhat dark, but I went in and had almost come to the piano before I recognised the player—Courvoisier. Overcome with vexation and confusion at the *contretemps*, I paused a moment, undecided whether to turn back and go out again. In any case I resolved not to remain in the room. He was seated with his back to me, and still continued to play. Some music was on the desk of the piano before him.

I might turn back without being observed. I would do so. Hardly, though—a mirror hung directly before the piano, and I now saw that while he continued to play, he was quietly looking at me, and that his keen eyes—that hawk's glance which I

knew so well—must have recognised me. That decided me. I would not turn back. It would be a silly, senseless proceeding, and would look much more invidious than my remaining. I walked up to the piano, and he turned, still playing.

“*Guten Tag, mein Fräulein.*”

I merely bowed, and began to search through a pile of songs and music upon the piano. I would at any rate take some away with me to give *some* colour to my proceedings. Meanwhile, he played on.

I selected a song, not in the least knowing what it was, and rolling it up, was turning away.

“Are you busy, Miss Wedderburn?”

“N—no.”

“Would it be asking too much of you to play the pianoforte accompaniment?”

“I will try,” said I, speaking briefly, and slowly drawing off my gloves.

“If it is disagreeable to you, don’t do it,” said he, pausing.

“Not in the very least,” said I, avoiding looking at him.

He opened the music. It was one of

Jensen's *Wanderbilder* for piano and violin—the *Kreuz am Wege*.

“I have only tried it once before,” I remarked, “and I am a dreadful bungler.”

“*Bitte sehr!*” said he, smiling, arranging his own music on one of the stands and adding, “Now I am ready.”

I found my hands trembling so much that I could scarcely follow the music. Truly this man, with his changes from silence to talkativeness, from ironical hardness to cordiality, was a puzzle and a trial to me.

Das Kreuz am Wege turned out rather lame. I said so when it was over.

“Suppose we try it again,” he suggested, and we did so. I found my fingers lingering and forgetting their part as I listened to the piercing beauty of his notes.

“That is dismal,” said he.

“It is a dismal subject, is it not?”

“Suggestive, at least. ‘The Cross by the Wayside.’ Well, I have a mind for something more cheerful. Did you leave the ball early last night?”

“No; not very early.”

“Did you enjoy it?”

"It was all new to me—very interesting—but I don't think I quite enjoyed it."

"Ah, you should see the balls at Florence, or Venice, or Vienna!"

He smiled as he leaned back, as if thinking over past scenes.

"Yes," said I dubiously, "I don't think I care much for such things, though it is interesting to watch the little drama going on around."

"And to act in it," I also thought, remembering Anna Sartorius and her whisper, and I looked at him. "*Not* honest, *not* honourable. Hiding from shame and disgrace." I looked at him and did not believe it. For the moment the torturing idea left me. I was free from it and at peace.

"Were you going to practise?" he asked. "I fear I disturb you."

"Oh no! It does not matter in the least. I shall not practise now."

"I want to try some other things," said he, "and Friedhelm's and my piano was not loud enough for me, nor was there sufficient space between our walls for the

sounds of a Symphony. Do you not know the mood?"

"Yes."

"But I am afraid to ask you to accompany me."

"Why?"

"You seem unwilling."

"I am not; but I should have supposed that my unwillingness—if I had been unwilling—would have been an inducement to you to ask me."

"*Herrgott!* Why?"

"Since you took a vow to be disagreeable to me, and to make me hate you."

A slight flush passed rapidly over his face, as he paused for a moment and bit his lips.

"*Mein Fräulein*—that night I was in bitterness of spirit—I hardly knew what I was saying——"

"I will accompany you," I interrupted him, my heart beating. "Only how can I begin unless you play, or tell me what you want to play?"

"True," said he, laughing, and yet not moving from his place beside the piano, upon

which he had leaned his elbow, and across which he now looked at me with the self-same kindly, genial glance as that he had cast upon me across the little table at the Köln restaurant. And yet not the self-same glance, but another, which I would not have exchanged for that first one.

If he would but begin to play, I felt that I should not mind so much ; but when he sat there and looked at me and half smiled, without beginning anything practical, I felt the situation at least trying.

He raised his eyes as a door opened at the other end of the saal.

“Ah, there is Friedhelm,” said he, “now he will take seconds.”

“Then I will not disturb you any longer.”

“On the contrary,” said he, laying his hand upon my wrist. (My dream of the morning flashed into my mind.) “It would be better if you remained, then we could have a trio. Friedel, come here ! You are just in time. Fräulein Wedderburn will be good enough to accompany us, and we can try the Fourth Symphonie.”

“What you call ‘Spring’ ?” inquired

Helfen, coming up smilingly. "With all my heart. Where is the score?"

"*What you call Spring?*" Was it possible that in Winter—on a cold and unfriendly day—we were going to have Spring, leafy bloom, the desert filled with leaping springs, and blossoming like a rose? Full of wonder, surprise, and a certain excitement at the idea, I sat still and thought of my dream, and the rain beat against the windows, and a draughty wind fluttered the tinselly decorations of last night. The floor was strewn with fragments of garments torn in the crush—paper and silken flowers, here a rosette, there a buckle, a satin bow, a tinsel spangle. Benches and tables were piled about the room, which was half dark; only to westward, through one window, was visible a paler gleam, which might by comparison be called light.

The two young men turned over the music, laughing at something, and chaffing each other. I never in my life saw two such entire friends as these; they seemed to harmonise most perfectly in the midst of their unlikeness to each other.

"Excuse that we kept you waiting, *mein*

Fräulein," said Courvoisier, placing some music before me. "This fellow is so slow, and will put everything into order as he uses it."

"Well for you that I am, *mein Lieber*," said Helfen composedly. "If any one had the enterprise to offer a prize to the most extravagant, untidy fellow in Europe, the palm would be yours—by a long way too."

"Friedel binds his music and numbers it," observed Courvoisier. "It is one of the most beautiful and affecting of sights to behold him with scissors, paste-pot, brush, and binding. It occurs periodically about four times a year, I think, and moves me almost to tears when I see it."

"*Der edle Ritter* leaves *his* music unbound, and borrows mine on every possible occasion when his own property is scattered to the four winds of heaven."

"*Aber! aber!*" cried Eugen. "That is too much! I call Frau Schmidt to witness that all my music is put in one place."

"I never said it wasn't. But you never can find it when you want it, and the confusion is delightfully increased by your con-

stantly rushing off to buy a new *Partitur* when you can't find the old one ; so you have three or four of each."

"This is all to show off what he considers his own good qualities : a certain slow, methodical plodding, and a good memory, which are natural gifts, but which he boasts of as if they were acquired virtues. He binds his music because he is a pedant and a prig, and can't help it ; a bad fellow to get on with. Now, *mein Bester*, for the *Frühling*."

"But the *Fräulein* ought to have it explained," expostulated Helfen, laughing. "Every one has not the misfortune to be so well acquainted with you as I am. He has rather insane fancies, sometimes," he added, turning to me, "without rhyme or reason that I am aware, and he chooses to assert that Beethoven's Fourth Symphony, or the chief *motive* of it, occurred to him on a spring day, when the master was, for a time, quite charmed from his bitter humour, and had, perhaps, some one by his side who put his heart in tune with the spring songs of the birds, the green of the grass, the scent of the flowers. So he calls it the *Frühling*

Symphonie, and will persist in playing it as such. I call the idea rather far-fetched, but then that is nothing unusual with him."

"Having said your remarkably stupid say, which Miss Wedderburn has far too much sense to heed in the least, *suppose* you allow us to begin," said Courvoisier, giving the other a push towards his violin.

But we were destined to have yet another coadjutor, in the shape of Karl Linders, who at that moment strolled in, and was hailed by his friends with jubilation.

"Come and help! Your *cello* will give just the mellowness that is wanted," said Eugen.

"I must go and get it then," said Karl, looking at me.

Eugen, with an indescribable expression as he intercepted the glance, introduced us to one another. Karl and Friedhelm Helfen went off to another part of the *Tonhalle* to fetch Karl's violoncello, and we were left alone again.

"Perhaps I ought not to have introduced him. I forgot *Lohengrin*," said Eugen.

"You know that you did *not*," said I in a low voice.

"No," he answered, almost in the same tone. "It was thinking of that which led me to introduce poor old Karl to you. I thought, perhaps, that you would accept it as a sign—will you?"

"A sign of what?"

"That I feel myself to have been in the wrong throughout—and forgive."

As I sat, amazed and a little awed at this almost literal fulfilment of my dream, the others returned.

Karl contributed the tones of his mellowest of instruments, which he played with a certain pleasant breadth and brightness of colouring, and my dream came ever truer and truer. The Symphony *was* as spring-like as possible. We tried it nearly all through: the hymn-like and yet fairy-like first movement; the second, that song of universal love, joy, and thanksgiving, with Beethoven's masculine hand evident throughout. To the notes there seemed to fall a sunshine into the room, and we could see the fields casting their covering of snow, and withered trees

bursting into bloom ; brooks swollen with warm rain, birds busy at nest-making ; clumps of primroses on velvet leaves, and the subtle scent of violets ; youths and maidens with love in their eyes, and even a hint of later warmth ; when hedges should be white with hawthorn, and the woodland slopes look, with their sheets of hyacinths, as if some of heaven's blue had been spilt upon earth's grass.

As the last strong, melodious modulations ceased, Courvoisier pointed to one of the windows.

"Friedhelm, you wretched unbeliever, behold the refutation of your theories. The Symphony has brought the sun out."

"For the first time," said Friedhelm, as he turned his earnest young face with its fringe of loose brown hair towards the sneaking sunray which was certainly looking shyly in. "As a rule the very heavens weep at the performance. Don't you remember the last time we tried it, it began to rain instantly?"

"Miss Wedderburn's co-operation must have secured its success, then, on this oc-

casion," said Eugen gravely, glancing at me for a moment.

"Hear! hear!" murmured Karl, screwing up his violoncello, and smiling furtively.

"Oh, I am afraid I hindered rather than helped," said I; "but it is very beautiful."

"But not like Spring, is it?" asked Friedhelm.

"Well, I think it is."

"There! I knew she would declare for me," said Courvoisier calmly, at which Karl Linders looked up in some astonishment.

"Shall we try this *Träumerei*, Miss Wedderburn, if you are not tired?"

I turned willingly to the piano, and we played Schumann's exquisite little "*Dreams*."

"Ah," said Eugen, with a deep sigh (and his face had grown sad), "isn't that the essence of sweetness and poetry? Here's another which is lovely. *Noch ein Paar, nicht wahr?*"

"And it will be *noch ein Paar* until our fingers drop off," scolded Friedhelm, who seemed, however, very willing to await that consummation. We went through many of the *Kinderscenen* and some of the *Kreiss-*

leriana, and just as we finished a sweet little *Bittendes Kind*, the twilight grew almost into darkness, and Courvoisier laid his violin down.

“Miss Wedderburn, thank you a thousand times !”

“Oh, *bitte sehr* !” was all I could say. I wanted to say so much more ; to say that I had been made happy ; my sadness dispelled, a dream half fulfilled, but the words stuck, and had they come ever so flowingly I could not have uttered them with Friedhelm Helfen, who knew so much, looking at us, and Karl Linders on his best behaviour in what he considered superior company.

I do not know how it was that Karl and Friedhelm, as we all came from the *Tonhalle*, walked off to the house, and Eugen and I were left to walk alone through the soaking streets, emptied of all their revellers, and along the dripping *Königsallée*, with its leafless chestnuts, to Sir Peter’s house. It was cold, it was wet—cheerless, dark, and dismal, and I was very happy—very insanely so. I gave a glance once or twice at my companion. The brightness had left his face ; it was stern and

worn again, and his lips set as if with the repression of some pain.

“Herr Courvoisier, have you heard from your little boy?”

“No.”

“No?”

“I do not expect to hear from him, *mein Fräulein*. When he left me we parted altogether.”

“Oh, how dreadful!”

No answer. And we spoke no more until he said “Good-evening” to me at the door of No. 3. As I went in I reflected that I might never meet him thus face to face again. Was it an opportunity missed, or was it a brief glimpse of unexpected joy?

END OF VOL. II.

